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NAVIGATE →

Issue 24 | Nov 2008

# 360zine

Free Magazine For Xbox 360 Gamers. *Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...*

**ROCKING REVIEW**



## GUITAR HERO WORLD TOUR

*Neversoft turn it up to 11*

**PLUS! FREE INSIDE**



**GEARS OF WAR 2  
SUPPLEMENT**

**PREVIEWED!**  
**CALL OF DUTY  
WORLD AT WAR**



**REVIEWED**  
**FAR CRY 2**



**REVIEWED**  
**FALLOUT 3**



**REVIEWED**  
**FABLE 2**



**PLAYTEST**  
**GEARS OF WAR 2**



**CONTROL** →





Tom Clancy's  
**ENDWAR**  
07.11.08



YOUR VOICE IS THE  
ULTIMATE WEAPON



XBOX 360 LIVE

PLAYSTATION 3 PSP



NINTENDO DS



UBISOFT

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NAVIGATE →

|03

# Welcome to 360Zine



It's a bumper issue to be sure. The year's Most Wanted are all lining up for release in the coming days and weeks, and this issue of 360Zine features previews and reviews of many of them. Kicking things off we have an extensive playtest of Gears of War 2. Mr Schilling has played the game through in its entirety and smacked it up in multiplayer with Epic's own Mike Capps - there's no better verdict this side of the review embargo. We've also been hands-on with CoD: World at War.

When it comes to reviews you're spoiled for choice, with Guitar Hero: World Tour, Fallout 3, Far Cry 2 and Dead Space all under the spotlight. And then there's the small matter of Fable 2 - or as it's come to be known in the GamerZines' office, Molyneux's Masterpiece.

Enjoy the issue...

**360Zine  
FEEDBACK!**  
Click here to  
tell us what  
you think of  
the new issue

Dan Hutchinson, Editor  
360zine@gamerzines.com

## MEET THE TEAM

Probably the best  
games writers on  
the planet



**Chris  
Schilling**  
Gung-ho with Gears  
of War 2



**Kieron Gillen**  
Cool as with Call of  
Duty: World at War



**Ian Morris**  
Far out with Far Cry 2



**Dead Space**  
Doom in the dark

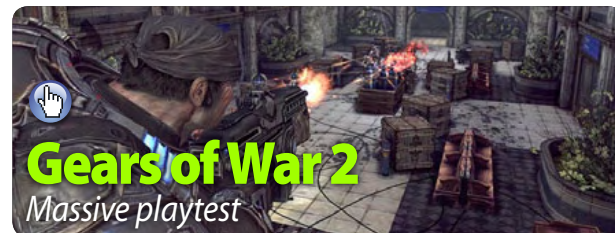
## Don't miss! *This month's top highlights*



**Call of Duty 5**  
HANDS-ON PREVIEW



**Fallout 3**  
Reviewed & rated



**Gears of War 2**  
Massive playtest



**Guitar Hero  
World Tour**  
Definitive review

## QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

Prince of Persia  
Stoked  
Madagascar:  
Escape 2 Africa  
Need for Speed:  
Undercover  
Afro Samurai  
Naruto:  
The Broken Bond  
Alpha Protocol

Gears of War 2  
Call of Duty:  
World at War  
Guitar Hero:  
World Tour  
Fallout 3  
Fable 2  
Far Cry 2  
Dead Space

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We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.



CONTROL →





# GEARS OF WAR 2



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

HOPE RUNS DEEP 7TH NOVEMBER

[www.gearsowar.com](http://www.gearsowar.com)



Microsoft  
game studios

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18

Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE



CONTROL →





## PRINCE OF PERSIA

**Publisher:** Ubisoft

**Developer:** Ubisoft Montreal

**Heritage:** Prince of Persia:

Warrior Within,  
Assassin's Creed

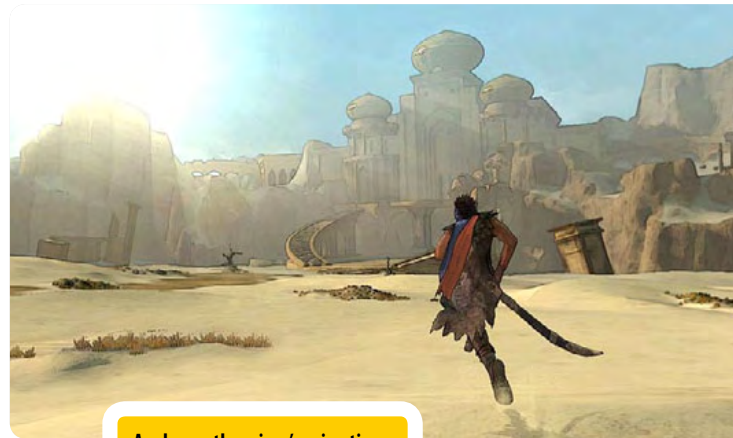
**Link:** <http://prince-of-persia.ubi.com>

**ETA:** 5th December



Aside from the graphics, it's the game's combat that's seen the biggest changes – fewer enemies, a slower pace and more thoughtful swordplay.

Elika is pretty much a constant companion – assisting you throughout and never once becoming a burden.



As always, the prince's animation is exemplary. Couple that with the stylish new look and you've got one hell of a good-looking game.



*"The combat is slower and more methodical too, never relying on button mashing"*

## FIRST LOOK

# Prince of Persia

*A leg-up for one of gaming's most agile heroes*

## What's the story?

It's a gorgeous new cel-shaded look for the Persian prince, signalling his second reinvention after the last gen platforming trilogy which marked his comeback. This time he's joined by new sidekick Elika, who's more than just a backward AI accomplice to babysit, assisting the prince both in combat – with a series of acrobatic special moves – and in the more familiar platforming. The plot tells the tale of an almighty scrap between the Gods of Light and Darkness, and a dark substance called Corruption, which the prince must destroy to save the world.

## What do we know?

It's not just the new visual style which makes this a very different game, but its completely revamped mechanics. The Prince doesn't feel quite as quick and nimble as he used to be, though if he's struggling to make a jump, Elika will leap in to save his skin, in a manner akin to the Sands of Time allowing the prince to rewind should he be facing instant death. The combat is slower and more methodical too, never relying on button mashing, but rather a more elegant system which requires you to read your opponents' attacks and respond accordingly.

## When do we get more?

The game launches on 5th December. No word yet on a demo, but we hope to be playing final code very soon.

## Anything else to declare?

Prince of Persia uses a modified version of the impressive Assassin's Creed game engine – part of the reason it looks so great.



# Shaun White

## SNOWBOARDING

See you on  
the mountain!



November 14th



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



Wii



XBOX 360 LIVE



PLAYSTATION 3

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# INCOMING

A fistful of top new titles coming to 360...



## Need for Speed: Undercover

Publisher: EA | ETA: 21st November

There may well be reason to get excited about EA's latest yearly update of the popular, if imperfect, racing franchise. A four-on-four online mode of Cops & Robbers sounds pretty damn ingenious to us.



## Afro Samurai

Publisher: Atari | ETA: 2009

Hip-hop, swordfighting and Samuel L Jackson – Afro Samurai might just be one of the coolest anime tie-ins ever created. With a terrific hand-drawn look to the graphics and Mace Windu himself returning as the voice of the titular bladesmith, expect a stylish and brutal brawler when this arrives in 2009.



## Stoked

Publisher: Destineer | ETA: 2009

Brilliantly named developer Bongfish is behind this snowboarding sim, which looks set to give Shaun White a run for his money. Not content with providing just one peak to glide down, there will be five open-world mountains, while the dynamic weather system provides perfect precipitation – from gently falling flakes to full-on blizzards.

## Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa

Publisher: Activision | ETA: 28th November

Mixing a host of different gameplay types with the chance to play as just about every animal character from the film sequel, Madagascar looks to have transferred the humour of the movie to the small screen well. With a multiplayer tournament mode bolstering the single-player missions, this could be a little longer-lasting than your average tie-in.



## Naruto: The Broken Bond

Publisher: Ubisoft | ETA: 21st November

Fans of the anime will be in seventh heaven with this action-adventure sequel to the successful Rise Of A Ninja, as it features 25 characters from the series, as well as a first for the franchise – an online multiplayer mode, which allows you to compete against friends and other users in special tournaments.



## Alpha Protocol

Publisher: Sega | ETA: Q1 2009

The more we see of Sega's spy-themed action RPG, the more excited we get. The latest footage has guns, women, helicopters and more as Obsidian Entertainment goes all Jason Bourne on us. And with the innovative Dialogue Stance system and plenty of stat-building, this should engage your brain as much as your trigger finger.

UPCOMING

DECEMBER

● Banjo Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts

● High School Musical 3

JANUARY

● Red Faction: Guerilla

● RACE Pro

FEBRUARY

● WSC REAL 08 Snooker

● This is Vegas

MARCH

● Dynasty Warriors: GUNDAM 2

● Ninja Blade



# "THE MOST VISCERAL CALL OF DUTY EVER!"

- Xbox 360 The Official Magazine



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

Available November 2008

## CALL OF DUTY WORLD AT WAR

WWW.CALLOFDUTY.COM



PlayStation 2

PLAYSTATION 3



Games for Windows



XBOX 360



Wii

NINTENDO DS

treuarch

ACTIVISION



CONTROL →





## HANDS ON

# Gears of War 2

*The COGs are turning...*

About an hour before the end of Gears 2's campaign, your correspondent realises his mouth has been open for several minutes, his jaw having well and truly dropped and stayed there amid scenes of blistering intensity and riotous carnage. It's the blockbuster sequel everyone's looking forward to, and Epic has seen to it that no-one can possibly be disappointed.

The story mode takes us 12 hours – on Normal difficulty, as we're not masochists, nor do we have enough time to die repeatedly on Hardcore mode. And that's without hunting down all the paraphernalia lining the levels – from COG tags to notes, to items hinting at what the world was like before the Locust came. Whack the difficulty level right up, make sure you search as much as you destroy, and you're probably looking at a meaty 15 to 18 hour experience. Given the comparative brevity of the original Gears' single-player mode, and it's clear we're talking about much more bang for your buck here.

Yet that's not to say it's become bloated. One or two longueurs here

and there slow the pace, but most of them are intentional, with just one abysmal driving section bringing these Gears grinding to a virtual standstill. It feels churlish to pick on one individual >

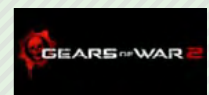
The sense of being part of a huge conflict is more obvious from the outset – this scene is during the game's superb first act.

**"Whack the difficulty level right up, make sure you search as much as you destroy, and you're looking at an 15 to 18 hour experience"**

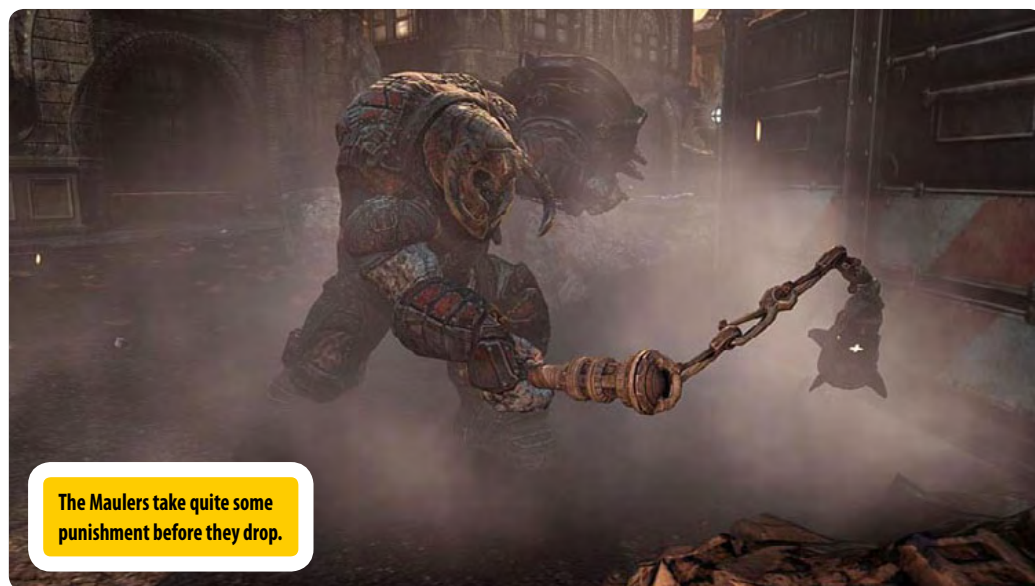
Gears 2 truly lives up to its 'destroyed beauty' aesthetic. It's one of the best-looking games we've ever seen.

**PREVIEW  
FEEDBACK!**  
Click here to  
tell us what  
you think of  
Gears of War 2





Fortunately, most enemies aren't stupid enough to be dispatched in such obvious ways, but then this is essentially the tutorial.



The Maulers take quite some punishment before they drop.

## > Gears of War 2 continued

element, but when you consider it might make most players look back on the similarly complained-about vehicle sequence in the original with a greater fondness, you realise just how bad it is.

But that's about it as far as criticism goes. You can argue that the story's not as affecting as it should be, or even that the slightly manipulative emotional side to Gears 2 detracts from the gung-ho action, but overall, writer Josh Ortega has crafted a hugely compelling



**"Writer Josh Ortega has crafted a hugely compelling narrative, which takes Delta Squad underground and back again"**

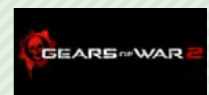
narrative, which takes Delta Squad underground and back again, introducing a number of enjoyable episodes as the COG forces take the fight to the Locust, and all the while Dominic Santiago searches for his lost wife, Maria. While Cliff Bleszinski describes the game as a love story, the truth is that the friendship between Dom and Marcus is perhaps more affecting – we're not saying this is a 12 hankie weepie, far from it, but there are some quietly touching moments

between the two as they encounter some of the horrors of the war that has totally ravaged their planet.

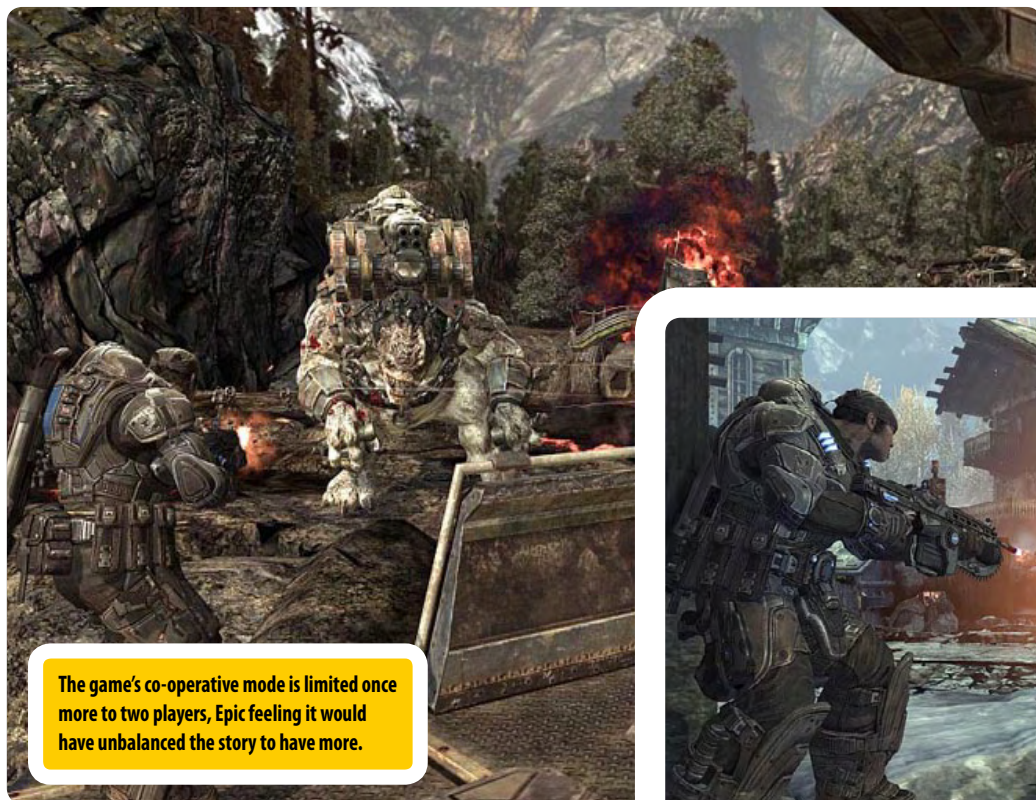
Yet the story is but a small part of what makes Gears 2 so great. Its gameplay might not be revolutionary, but this is a more confident, better-paced game, whose scale lives up to its developer's name. It's an epic in every sense – making you feel like a tiny speck of paint on a giant canvas of war, as you witness pitched battles taking place just out of reach, occasionally feeling utterly helpless as you travel past other COG soldiers getting obliterated by the Locust hordes – superior both in number and in size, as Brumaks, Reavers and even Corpseres all join the fray. One early section sees you travelling on a giant transport rig, and all the aforementioned creatures show up as you attempt to defend your







An early Reaver fight in the hospital courtyard sets the tone, and you'll be facing many more of them as the game enters its final stages.



The game's co-operative mode is limited once more to two players, Epic feeling it would have unbalanced the story to have more.

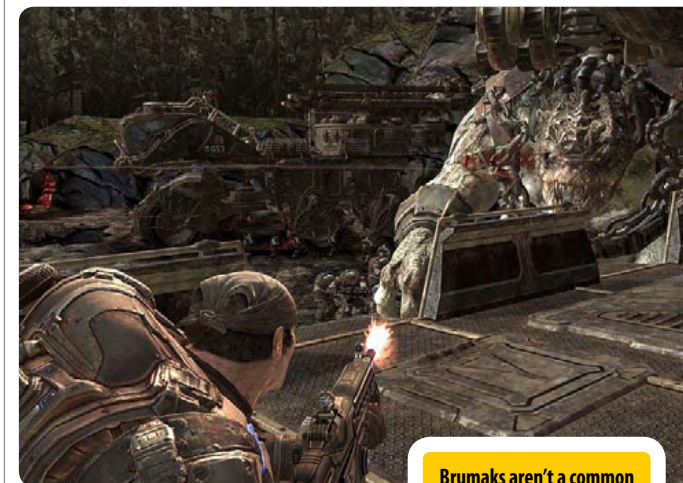
## > Gears of War 2 continued

mechanical beast from these more organic enemy equivalents. And if you think it couldn't get any more thrilling than that, then you don't know Bleszinski and team very well. The ante is constantly upped, and while things are occasionally dialled down in terms of scale, it maintains a genuine intensity – one cramped indoor location brings about a set-piece that will leave your palms sweating, topping even the mighty Resident Evil 4 in terms of pulse-quickenning excitement.

It goes without saying that Gears is a visual powerhouse, but even looking at the screenshots scattered across these pages doesn't come close to the graphical splendour of seeing the game in motion. Indeed, some of the most visually impressive moments aren't featured here, because to show grabs of those sections would be



Fighting the explosive Tickers in Landown – the increased variety in enemies allows Epic to mix up the combat more.



Brumaks aren't a common foe, but Epic makes up for their disappearance from the original with a number of testing encounters against them.

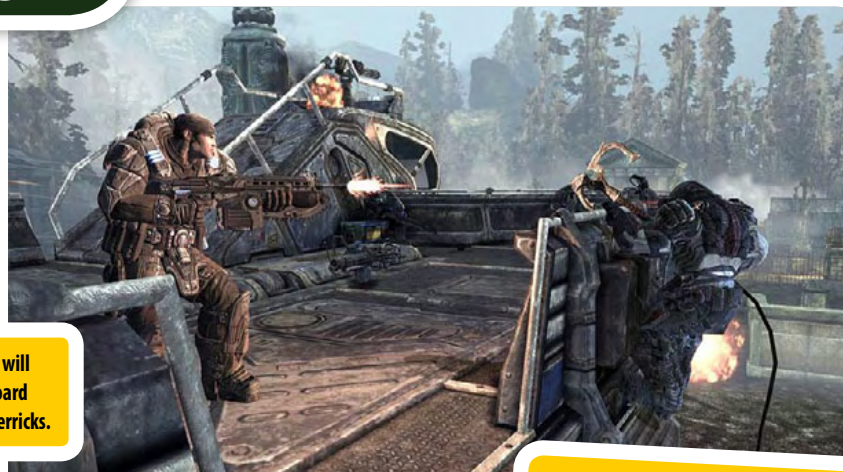
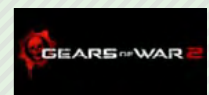
***"There's a level of consistency and polish here that puts its rivals to shame"***

spoiling some of the game's biggest surprises. Environments aren't perhaps quite as destructible as some would like, but there's a level of consistency and polish here that puts its rivals to shame. While it might be a push to call it pretty, it'd be hard to say that Gears 2 isn't the best-looking game on 360. And it sounds fantastic, too – the brash, noisy spot effects joined by a stirring soundtrack which always kicks in at the right moment, ebbing and flowing according to the onscreen action.

Yet if the single-player provides more than enough value for money, then the multiplayer modes make Gears 2 the bargain of the century. There are more game modes than before, with more maps, a better party-





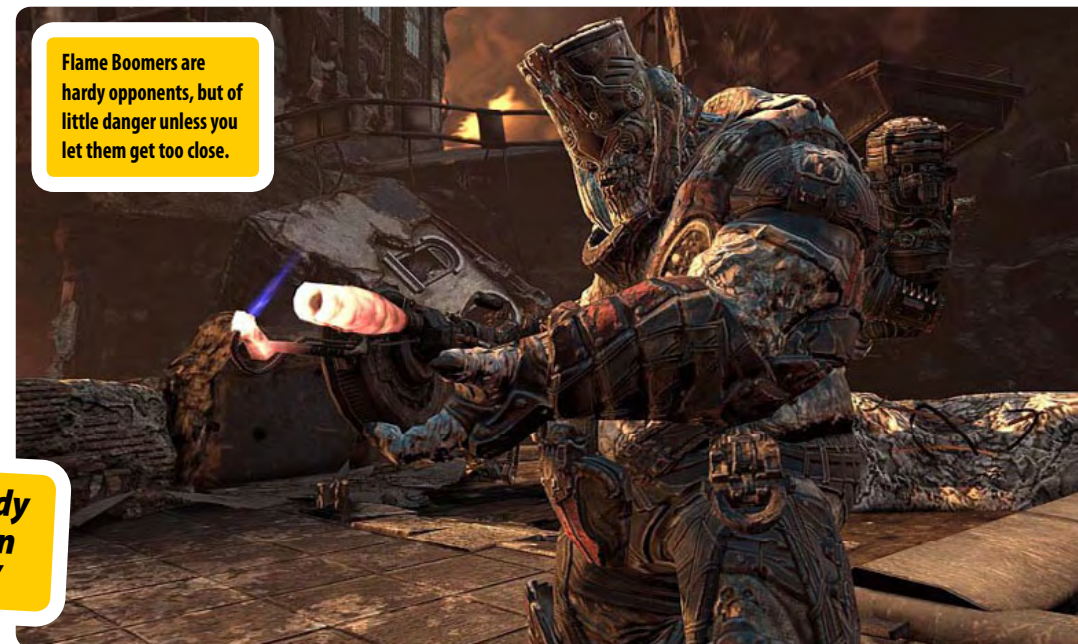


Locust troops will attempt to board the Assault Derricks.



You'll often hear the scuttling Ticklers before you see them, and if the clacking stops then you'll know they're about to blow.

*"This is a brutal, bloody sequel that more than lives up to the hype"*



Flame Boomers are hardy opponents, but of little danger unless you let them get too close.

## > Gears of War 2 continued

making system and a more intuitive and better-presented online experience in general. We've waxed lyrical about Horde several times now, but each time we play it, it seems to

get even better. While that initial dizzying, chaotic rush of your first game can't quite be recreated on repeat playthroughs, it still feels incredibly frantic, yet amazingly tactical, as you and four friends take up positions around the large, detailed

maps, occasionally moving to pick up new weapons, ammo and to revive fallen teammates. Or to sprint away from larger waves of more ferocious foes, backpedalling, firing wildly and fighting for survival. And then doing it again... and again... and again...

Most of the other multiplayer modes are more traditional, but Submission (or Meat Flag as the chaps at Epic call it) is an interesting take on the standard CTF formula, forcing you to drag a chosen enemy across the map to your base. Given how slowly you move when holding an opponent,

this gets both messy and hectic, with frenzied attempts at protecting the carrier, forcing tactical improvisation and frequent re-adjustments of your team's strategy.

We'll bring you our final verdict next month (clue: the score below may not really be that much of an estimate) but in the meantime, if you've pre-ordered Gears 2, then you can rest assured that you've not made a mistake in being prepared. This is a brutal, bloody sequel that fully lives up to the hype, and an essential purchase to anyone above the age of 18. ●

### 360Zine

#### HOW COMPLETE?

99%

#### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

94%

*The Fenix rises – a truly Epic follow-up*





HIGH IMPACT DOUBLE TEAM MOVES



NEW CREATE A FINISHER



NEW INFERNO MATCH



ROAD TO WRESTLEMANIA CO-OP

TAG TEAMS EXPLODE ONTO WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2009...  
IT'S JUST YOU AND YOUR PARTNER, BACK-TO-BACK  
AND READY TO FACE THE ONSLAUGHT.



ALONE, YOU'RE GREAT.  
**TOGETHER YOU'RE UNSTOPPABLE**



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



PSP

XBOX 360 LIVE

PlayStation 2

PLAYSTATION 3

NINTENDO DS

Wii



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**Publisher:** Activision  
**Developer:** Treyarch  
**Heritage:** Call of Duty 3  
**Link:** [www.callofduty.com](http://www.callofduty.com)  
**ETA:** November 14th

## HANDS ON

# Call of Duty: World at War

*How all your friends can hear the call together...*

**T**he great battle approaches its climax. Call of Duty heads towards the conclusion of the war and the story of the fifth edition of the game does likewise. It's been an uphill fight. When announced, there was the dual disappointment that one of the most successful games of recent

years would see a return to the mud-streaked arenas of World War 2 and the seemingly second-string Treyarch would be doing it instead of Infinity Ward. It's a pressure that they were aware of.

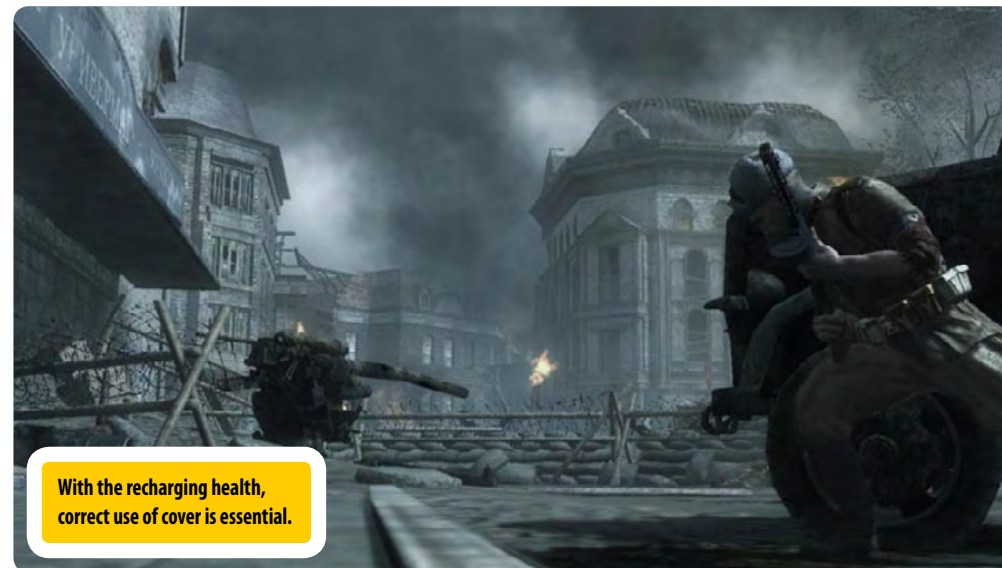
"The bar was so high," admits producer Noah Heller. "When you add

Call of Duty 3 on top of that... while it was a good game, there's not a lot of love for it. We had a lot to prove."

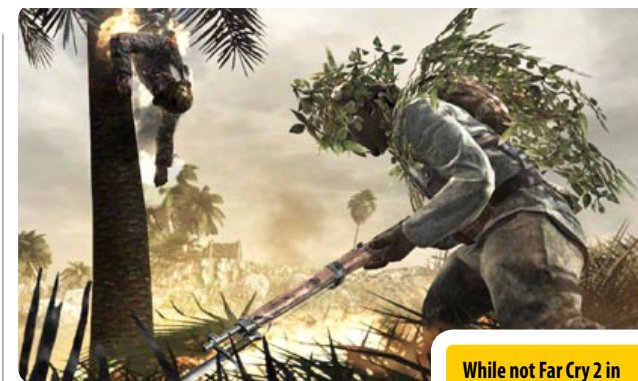
But with the beta available showing what the team has been up to, plus the actual hands-on experience of the game in co-op mode, it appears that Treyarch have actually pulled it off. From these first impressions, it looks like World of War is going to be a genuinely credible successor. Noah actually understands the reticence, and even though people are starting to realise that Call of Duty 3 was turned around in eight months, he doesn't think they should just pat them on the head and accept it. But he also thinks that when people play World At War – which had a real two year development cycle – they'll change their mind. "I'm not asking for forgiveness," he says honestly, "I'm asking for a second chance."



**The Flamethrower, while not an especially effective multiplayer weapon, is funny.**



**With the recharging health, correct use of cover is essential.**



**While not Far Cry 2 in any way – it's as linear as ever – the levels' scale is suitable for true co-op gameplay.**

The immediate impression of the game is one of Brutality. The Pacific theatre is populated with Japanese soldiers, whose AI has been constructed to best replicate the intermittent banzai-charge and guerrilla attack aggression of the Japanese. And the Berlin missions, where you play the revenge-crazed Russians pushing into the lair of the Nazi beast, are often harrowing.





The storming of Berlin was one of the most bitterly fought encounters in WW2.



Night levels are best for those who like fiddling with their gamma settings.

## > Call of Duty continued

"We weren't going to put civilians in Berlin (which actually occurred) because at the end of the day, we're an entertainment product," says Noah. "What we did want to do was make

some really big moral decisions." He points over at a monitor where another journalist is playing the game. "In the level that people are playing here today, we see Germans begging for mercy," he says. "Their sergeant tells them in no uncertain terms that they

don't take prisoners. You don't have to execute them yourselves but you have to make that decision. Because that's what the Russians were doing. In fact, the Russians weren't going to let you make that decision. Either you were going to kill them or you get killed yourself." When the moment comes for me, I end up deliberately shooting to miss, letting the other soldiers do the job for me. It really is gruelling stuff, and Noah describes some playtesters having to excuse themselves to get a breath of fresh air after first experiencing the genuinely brilliant – if horrific – flamethrower.

## ANSWERING THE CALL

*It's your duty, you know...*



Rising  
guns



Blood  
brothers



Le armour



## Rising guns

While the Nazis are familiar foes, the ways the Japanese work is really something different, simulating the rules their army operated under. In some ways, the Pacific theatre is a kind of proto-Vietnam based around early Guerrilla tactics such as sudden ambushes and charges. The key idea is one of aggression – the idea that they're actually trying to kill you through their actions rather than just making themselves an easy target.

Getting hands on with the two co-operative modes shows the separate parts of the game to their best advantage. While it's clearly Call of Duty, it's built to accommodate up to four people in the online play. The AI scales up appropriately too, so four players on the hardest setting is a gruelling battle. Levels, while still corridors, are now wide corridors, with noticeable multiple routes in key positions. Splitting up your group can







## > Call of Duty continued

be dangerous, though. If any of your colleagues is shot, you have a while to recover them while they lie on their

backs defending themselves with their pistols. If you fail to rescue them, then it's game over.

This tension is even more noticeable in the other way to play co-op. Going

through as a team is one thing but it introduces some competitive co-op modes which turn it much more into a pure game. It's about scoring points. And, like Bizarre Creation's The Club, by chaining kills close together you can increase your points multiplier. Chain enough, and you can be in the millions when the people you're playing against amble around in the hundreds. In other words, you're all trying to get the most kills in a tiny space of time... however, if you die, you're still reliant on them reviving you. That's not the only co-op mode. When a developer was moving through the menus I noticed some mention of a Zombie option. Noah refuses to confirm details, but says that there is a game mode which unlocks when you complete the game – and that's the one they all play when trying to relax, even after a couple of years with the game.

Which all makes World At War sound as if it'll have great multiplayer – which is without even talking about the more traditional game that's built on top of the rock-solid chassis of CoD4. Plus killer dogs. And tanks. It looks like November won't be seeing a blemish added to Call of Duty's history. ●



Save embarrassment. Make sure the Quartermaster hasn't swapped your flamethrower for a hoover.

Roll over screen for annotations



**PREVIEW  
FEEDBACK!**  
Click here to  
tell us what  
you think of  
Call of Duty:  
World at War



Hate trucks? Set them on fire.  
It's the only sane thing to do.

Some battles take place  
on Beaches, because this  
is a WW2 game, after all.



360Zine



HOW COMPLETE?

95%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

90%

WW2 made all shiny new by being as grimy as possible







Microsoft  
game studios



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

*For every choice, a different destiny.  
Who will you become?*

Tragedy has brought you to a crossroads, and now you must choose.

Revenge or acceptance? Justice or retribution? But choose wisely.

The paths are many, their consequences severe.

And the future of Albion is in your hands.

Available 24 October 2008. [xbox.com/fable2](http://xbox.com/fable2)

# FABLE II

Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE



CONTROL →







# Guitar Hero: World Tour

**Publisher:** Activision

**Developer:** Neversoft

**Heritage:** Guitar Hero III:

Legends of Rock,

Tony Hawk series

**Link:** [www.guitarhero.com](http://www.guitarhero.com)

**ETA:** 7th November

## The majesty of rock

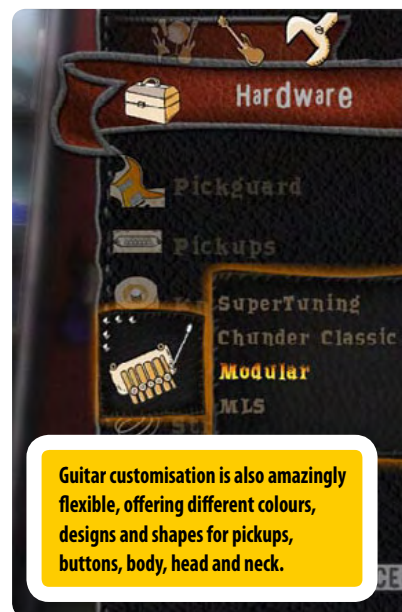
It's fair to say that not everyone will get quite as epic and fulfilling an experience the first time they play Guitar Hero World Tour as we did. On stage at the Electric Ballroom in Camden, strumming, drumming and crooning our way through a substantial selection of the game's 80-something tracklist is a multiplayer session never to be forgotten. And then we got our take-home promo copy to experience the songs we hadn't tried and to tinker

with the game's remarkable studio feature for several hours, and, tellingly, we were still having a whale of a time. While we won't find out until next month whether Harmonix's Rock Band sequel can best its rhythm-action rival, there are areas where Neversoft's effort clearly comes out on top.

World Tour's instruments are in a league of their own. While early reports suggest that Rock Band 2's equipment is a definite improvement on last year's,



Red Octane's experience clearly shows in this area, making its guitars and particularly its drums that much more satisfying to play. The redesigned – and now wireless – guitar is superb, feeling larger, weightier and less like a toy than ever before. Its new neck is slightly longer, and its button placement has been kept identical, making it instantly accessible to those familiar with the series, while providing improvements in the form of a touch-sensitive lower neck for 'ghost' notes during



Guitar customisation is also amazingly flexible, offering different colours, designs and shapes for pickups, buttons, body, head and neck.

## STAR GUITAR

Three steps to becoming a virtual rock legend



Star  
power



Studio  
live



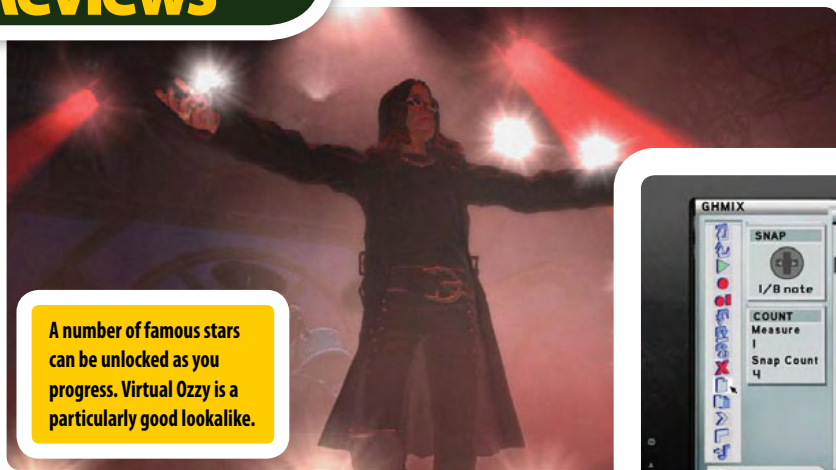
Chart-  
topper



## Star power

The Create a Rockstar mode allows you a number of ways to customise your avatar, from a load of options to change your player's face, to a series of haircuts, clothes, tattoos and more. Best of all, you'll be able to choose your character's reaction to a good or bad gig, or how he/she walks out on stage.





A number of famous stars can be unlocked as you progress. Virtual Ozzy is a particularly good lookalike.

GHMix looks incredibly daunting, but it's more straightforward than most will spend time realising.



## > Guitar Hero continued

solos, and a star power button which means you no longer have to tilt to really rock out. Meanwhile, the drums are on a different level entirely. After a short period of readjustment, the drum kit just seems right. The raised cymbals make it feel far closer to a real kit, and the rubbery pads can withstand one hell of a battering. Meanwhile, our vigorous testing of the kick pedal's solidity proved that it's a far sturdier proposition than Rock Band's equivalent, which felt like it could fall apart in a light breeze.

As for the music itself, it's certainly an eclectic tracklist, which is to be commended, but it's arguable that some of its more obscure tracks make it less than ideal for band play. Will many people really be able to manage vocals on At The Drive In's One Armed Scissor? We're not convinced, though the song's certainly satisfying to play. Yet it's always been part of the appeal of the Guitar Hero series to discover new favourites through experimenting with tracks you don't know – and given the fact that you're not stuck

playing the same tunes at the same venues over and over, thanks to the revamped Career mode (which rewards you in money for your performance,

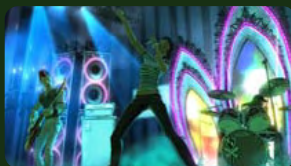
**"In the Studio you'll be able to mix and remix your own songs, setting up riffs by playing them 'live' in real time"**

the cash being used to unlock new gigs) you'll rarely have to get through songs you're not particularly keen on.

Besides, with regular downloadable content and the new GHTunes service – a feature which allows players to upload their self-created songs to Activision's online service and download those from other users – you'll never be stuck for a new track to play along to. Which brings us to probably World Tour's defining feature – the studio. Here you'll be able to mix and remix your own songs, setting up riffs by playing them 'live' in >

## FREEZE FRAME

Breaking the game down, one stage at a time...



### 30 MINUTES

First try out the new drums – notes missed, song failed. A bit of brain rewiring later, and...



### 1 HOUR

...then you realise the peripheral's genius. And you're finding new respect for Coldplay's drummer.



### 3 HOURS

Cueing up several tracks per gig? A simple idea, but why can't we see each instrument's difficulty?



### 6 HOURS

Less linear gig progress is much more enjoyable, allowing you to avoid songs you're not keen on.



### 12 HOURS

Become your own uber-producer in the studio, tweaking until you're happy with your band's sound.







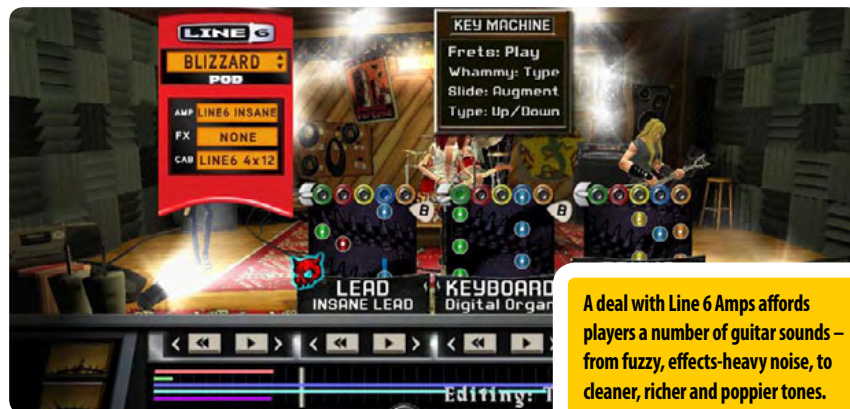
A new super-easy Beginner difficulty lets you hit any button as long as you're in time.



Ludicrous facial accoutrements and bizarre looks are all part and parcel of being part of a rock band.



You can create your own art for tattoos, and also for your band's logo.

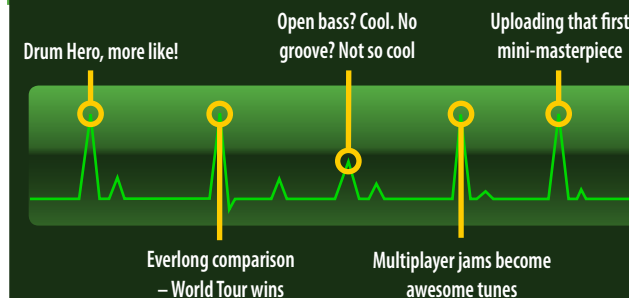


A deal with Line 6 Amps affords players a number of guitar sounds – from fuzzy, effects-heavy noise, to cleaner, richer and poppier tones.

## > Guitar Hero continued

real time while the game records your strumming, and then tweaking and fine-tuning the notes at your leisure. If you're patient enough, you can start completely from scratch, moving the song forward step-by-step and painstakingly perfecting your art – or you can pick from a host of presets, with several useful features that will allow you to create tunes without too much effort. A wealth of percussive loops can be activated simply by holding down several of the guitar buttons or drum pads at once, while the Arpeggiator replaces sustained notes with faster note patterns, sliding up and down your chosen scale depending on which buttons you're pressing. It's about as intuitive as you could hope for – which is to say that it's still going to take time to craft your masterpiece, but the tutorials are extremely thorough, showing you the ropes effectively enough that anyone should be able to get to grips with the studio's intricacies.

## PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



Ultimately, if you're not too concerned with indulging your inner songwriter, it's probably going to be the peripherals that just might swing things in Neversoft's favour. Rock Band 2 will likely just about have the edge when it comes to the guitar note charts, but with Red Octane's quality instruments being just that bit more satisfying to play – and the drumming barely putting a foot wrong – then World Tour might well have wrested the rhythm-action crown back from Harmonix. With peripheral cross-compatibility, you may well be tempted to buy both, though we warn you that once you've used the Guitar Hero equipment, you'll find it difficult to go back. ●

Chris Schilling

## 360Zine Verdict

Top of the pops!

- The drums are wonderful
- Astoundingly flexible studio
- Vastly improved note charts

90%



"...THIS IS THE TOMB RAIDER  
WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR"



"OUTSTANDING" 360



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

# TOMB RAIDER

UNDERWORLD

NOVEMBER 21, 2008  
[WWW.TOMBRAIDER.COM](http://WWW.TOMBRAIDER.COM)



Games for Windows

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NINTENDO DS

PlayStation.2

PLAYSTATION.3



CRYSTAL  
DYNAMICS

eidos



CONTROL →







# Fallout 3

## Warriors of the wasteland

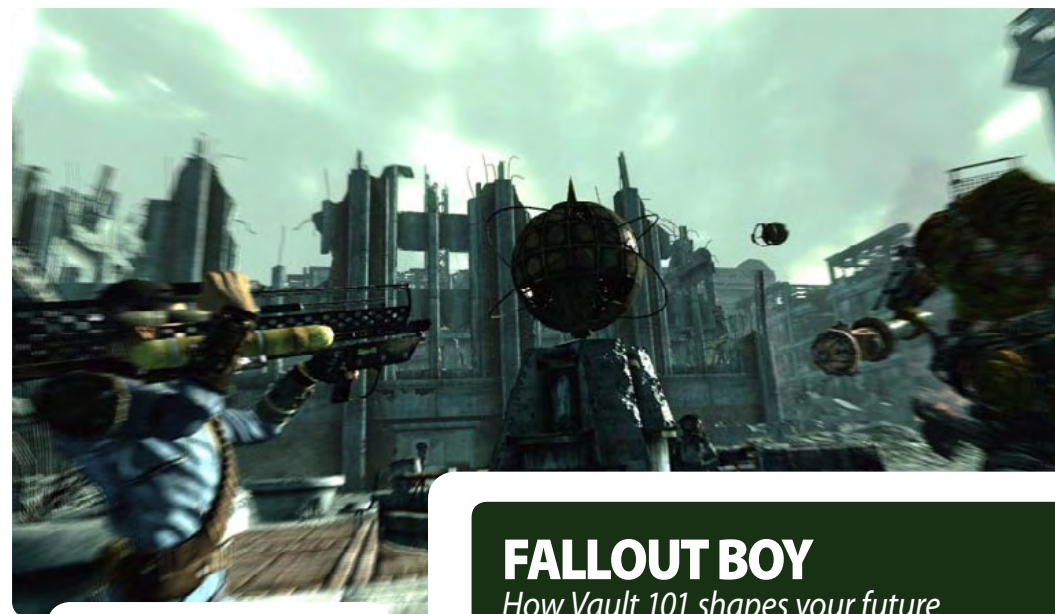
It's the end of the world as we know it, and we feel... well, pretty hard done by to be honest. After the vault-based opening section easing your 19-year-old self into the world, your dad ups and leaves, forcing you to venture outside into the wilds of a post-apocalyptic Washington DS with nothing but a baseball hat and a BB gun for protection. Cheers, Pa.

And that's not the only hardship you'll have to endure. Venture out into the wasteland, and you'll soon discover a bunch of unfriendly creatures, armed

raiders just about everywhere you turn, and townsfolk who treat newcomers with contempt, viewing your actions through constantly suspicious eyes. Stimpaks (the game's health giver) are rare, and weapons and ammo are even more sparse. And you'll have to deal with enemies twice your size, carrying much better hardware and who'll shoot you as soon as look at you.

## Staying true

So yes, Fallout 3 is hard – in that sense Bethesda has stayed true to the ethos



The Fat Man allows you to fire tubby little missiles which are absolutely devastating should they hit.

of the original PC RPGs, while also fixing a common complaint about Oblivion's difficulty sliders. But it should be noted that so harsh is its opening, we put the difficulty back down from Normal to Easy within an hour – and we like to think we're reasonably good gamers. In attempting a kind of realism, the developer has decided to make everything a bit of an effort – rewards aren't exactly huge, while questing often feels like one long, wearisome trudge from one place to the next, with a bit of shooting in-between to liven things up. If you thought the Lord of the Rings films contained a lot of walking, you're in for a shock here – particularly as the game prevents you from using fast-travel



## FALLOUT BOY

How Vault 101 shapes your future



Special needs



The cake is a lie



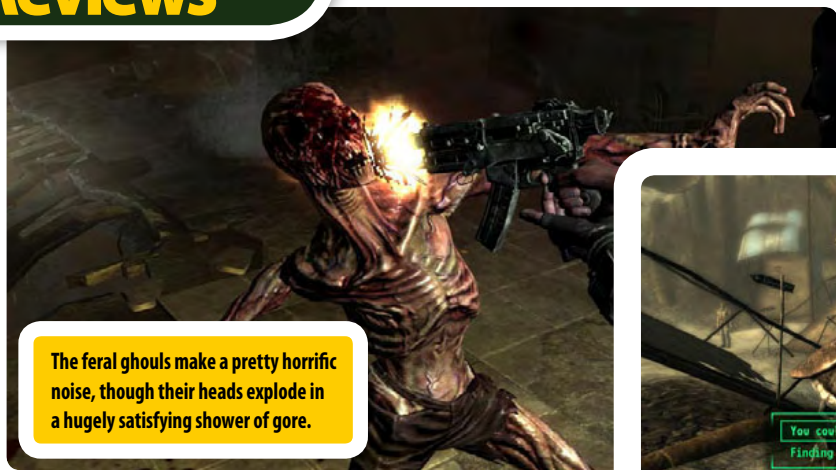
Sacred cow



## The cake is a lie

On your 10th birthday you'll watch your cake get splattered by a robot, have your first conversations and you're given your Pip-Boy 3000 – which is essentially the largest, coolest wristwatch in the world. This acts as your in-game menu – holding all the info about your character's stats.





The feral ghouls make a pretty horrific noise, though their heads explode in a hugely satisfying shower of gore.

Your Karma level affects who can join you as a companion – mercenary Jericho thought we were far too squeaky clean to tag along with.



Sneaking up on enemies isn't a tactic that works too often – particularly when they have a dog.

## > Fallout 3 continued

between already-discovered locations as often as possible.

We're used to games being hard, but at times Fallout 3 is just punishingly unfair. You'll be sent on a story mission, and it's only when you reach your destination that you realise you're woefully under-equipped for the job in hand. The game's compass system seems to delight in pointing you in the wrong direction – you can be following a path religiously, only to see a mountainous pile of rubble in front of you forcing you down another avenue – where, no doubt, another horde of slaving beasts or even a mercenary group with a contract out for your life are waiting to ambush you. And while we're complaining, the idea of your character starting off as someone who couldn't shoot straight if his life depended on it is theoretically sound, but the turn-based VATS combat system makes a mockery of your actions. On one occasion we unleashed

a volley of minigun shots into someone's face at point-blank range, only for said enemy to brush it off as if we'd just thrown a pea at him. Oh, and the third-person camera is flat-out embarrassing, with your character skating over surfaces in a truly ridiculous manner.

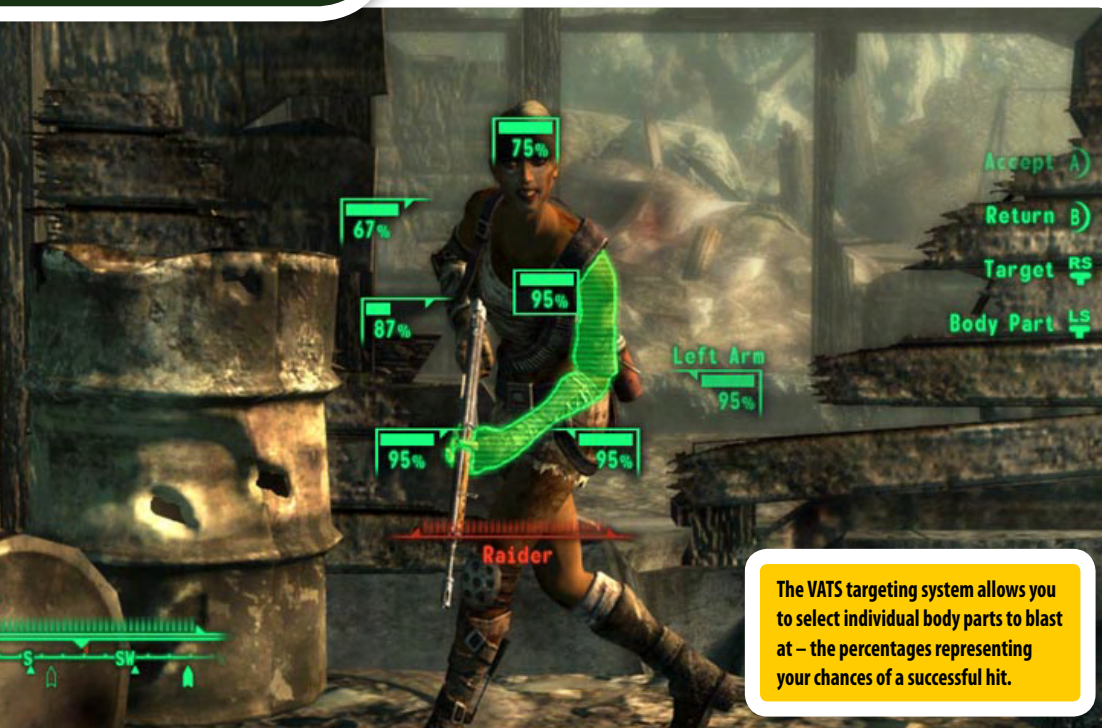
### Rich with possibilities

Persevere, however, and you'll find a game rich with possibilities and scope. While the wastes are a bleak place to be, it looks oddly beautiful at times, and some of the sights are genuinely sobering. We ventured into an abandoned village, and up the stairs in one house, a skeleton lay on a child's bed, with toys strewn around the room as harsh light filtered through the boarded up windows and our Geiger counter clicked ominously. During moments like this, you realise Bethesda's achievement in producing this epic gameworld, and it helps to

These Eyebots blare out crackly radio broadcasts as you cross the wastes. It's quite unnerving to hear a voice amid the relative calm, with just the wind and some sparse music for company.







The VATS targeting system allows you to select individual body parts to blast at – the percentages representing your chances of a successful hit.



Roll over screen for annotations

## > Fallout 3 continued

overcome some – if not all – of the game's mechanical issues. The more you level up, the more the game opens up – you'll battle a greater variety of monsters, new skills will allow you to hack computers, barter more effectively with shopkeepers and pick locks quicker than Houdini. Perks offer some unusual benefits – Bloody Mess not only ramps up the already pretty gruesome gore level but makes weapons do more damage, while Child at Heart allows you to sweet-talk poor, innocent kids into revealing the combination of their daddy's safe in which he keeps a stash of goodies...

## Oblivion with guns?

Oblivion with guns, then? Well, not really. Fallout 3 doesn't really fit such a neat description – indeed, its more traditional RPG elements feel closer to predecessor Morrowind, while its harsh difficulty and the streak of black humour running through it are pure Fallout. On its own terms, it successfully melds many aspects of the old PC games with the first-person perspective and grand scope of Bethesda's most celebrated title to date. Whether or not the two should have been bolted together in the first place is debatable, but this is a fascinating mess – much like the dystopia it portrays, you might say. ●



It's a beautifully realised world with some truly affecting sights.

## 360Zine Verdict

*Impressively ambitious, but falls short of its potential.*

- Immersive, atmospheric gameworld
- Absorbing main quests
- Loads of small niggles

# 80%








THE LAST STORY  
WE MAY EVER TELL  
WILL CLOSE THE DISTANCE  
BETWEEN  
PAST & PRESENT

---

IT WILL  
DESTROY THE LINE  
BETWEEN  
FACT & FICTION.

---

And mark  
THE END  
of all  
MYTHOLOGY.



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



**LEGENDARY**

LEGENDARYTHEGAME.COM



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# Fable II

*Decisions, decisions...*

**F**able II feels like the realisation of a dream. It feels like the game Peter Molyneux (of Populous, Syndicate, Black & White fame) wanted to make last time, but didn't quite get there. If you go in knowing nothing about it and try to ignore the score at the bottom of this review you'll almost certainly have all your expectations blown away. It really is that good.

To dial down the praise a bit, perhaps we should focus on some of the game's problems. They're mainly technical issues – people walking

through each other, clipping problems, the occasional bit of slowdown – but there are other issues, too. It can be difficult to get people to change their opinion of you, shy of doing something really drastic. One admirer who got on our nerves took seven slaps, five rude gestures and our dog urinating on her before she took the hint. Other tiny AI niggles crop up – characters repeat dialogue or occasionally react too slowly to your behaviour, while some seem to get locked into an animation routine and it's impossible to talk to



Bowerstone Market is a hive of activity, and it's here you'll find the most jobs, shops and missions.

## A DESIGN FOR LIFE

*So what exactly makes Albion so special?*



**Obscene, not heard**

**Evolving combat**

**Variety show**

## Obscene, not heard

The expression wheel adds a touch of levity to any situation – after performing a particularly heroic act, we were surrounded by adoring fans, and proceeded to execute a ridiculously long belch, which amused half the crowd, and angered the more stuffy, prudish types. Well, it made us laugh.

them. Particularly annoying when it's your wife and you're attempting to save your marriage after spending too much time away from home.

Then there are some other problems which aren't really problems at all. The main story is pretty short – less than 12 hours if you blast through while ignoring everything else. You'll often be trying to have a quiet moment with your family, only to be pestered by fans asking for autographs or your hand in marriage. There's only one save file, which means no going back and seeing what would have happened had you made an alternate choice.

### People in love with you: 105

The reasons those are non-issues is simple: they're all intentional design decisions intended to provoke a response in the player. Sure, the main







Weather effects have been vastly improved, offering more atmosphere and affecting play to a more significant degree.

Larger enemies are few and far between, but they offer a different kind of challenge to your combat skills.



It's perhaps a little too easy to put on weight in the game, and it's tricky to shed those excess pounds, unless you buy some fat-reducing celery.



## > Fable II continued

quest isn't particularly lengthy, but who cares when the world is this rich and the side-quests so plentiful? Yes, your followers can get annoying, but then isn't that an effective treatise on the pitfalls of fame? And isn't this intended to make you realise that you could end it all with a couple of swipes of your sword? Finally, the single save file is part of the game's genius – it lends a real weight to the decisions you make. With no chance of seeing how things could have turned out differently had you taken an alternative path – at least until

you play through again – it forces you to think seriously about what you do.

The game's plot is a straightforward tale of revenge with a side order of world saving, but it's elevated to greatness by the quality of the storytelling and the brilliance of the writing. It helps having the likes of Julia Sawalha, Ron Glass, Zoe Wanamaker and Stephen Fry on vocal duties, but even the incidental voice acting – myriad lines of dialogue from hundreds of NPCs – is impressive. This compliment is extended to the written word – item

descriptions, diary entries and pieces of Albion lore are all worth perusing, particularly given that there are a few throwaway gags most players won't even notice (or even happen across at all). There's an inspired bit of punnery on

***"The game's plot is a straightforward tale of revenge with a side order of world saving"***

a famous line from movie classic *The Princess Bride*, while a particular potion has a delightful *Anchorman* reference. One item we happened across purely by chance towards the end is a surprisingly affecting nod to a character who appears early in the game. And side-quests are given the same attention to detail as the story missions – a couple took us to entirely new locations we'd never have otherwise reached. One has an amazingly sweet and touching – and moderately surprising – resolution. Others twist things completely on their



## FREEZE FRAME

*Breaking the game down, one stage at a time...*



### 30 MINUTES

Venturing out into the big wide world of Albion, awed by the scale of the place.



### 2 HOURS

Facing a Hobbe ambush as you travel between quests – they're not clever but do fight in packs.



### 7 HOURS

The Crucible tournament offers a way of increasing your experience and bank balance quickly.



### 12 HOURS

Finding the second hero to help you defeat your nemesis proves trickier than expected...



### 24 HOURS

Getting all outstanding business – quests, family, appearance – sorted before the final push.







There are games which are technically superior, but Fable II's splashes of colour (particularly during sunrise and sunset) lead to some beautiful moments.

## > Fable II continued

head – you might think you're doing a good deed, but don't be shocked to find that you're being conned. Even the story throws a few curveballs – one sequence forces you into confronting some hard truths about yourself, asking

just how much you're prepared to put on the line for what you believe in.

### Groin shots: 1

It's a cliché, but the more time you invest in Fable II, the more you'll get out of the experience. Which is why the story's relative brevity doesn't matter in

the slightest. For those who don't have much time to play games, it can be as short as you need it to be. But anyone experiencing it at leisure is almost certain to get a more emotionally satisfying experience. Albion, and its residents, genuinely change according to your actions – a simple choice in one seemingly unimportant quest completely alters an entire area of the game world. While some changes are merely cosmetic, it's fair to say that no two players will experience the same Albion. Though much of what you do in the game is simplistic in purely mechanical terms, the consequences are definitely not.

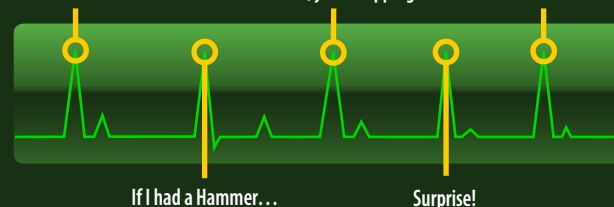
So it's a game of surface simplicity but with incredible depth. Nowhere is this more obvious than the game's combat system. It gets more complex and more satisfying the further you progress, though ham-fisted gamers can still get by with plenty of button-mashing and glugging plenty of health potions. All the statistical upgrades you get through experience and the weapons you choose make a significant difference to how you approach battles. We initially spent most time shooting and slashing, barely using our magic (or Will) abilities at all. After gaining one or two more powerful spells, we were suddenly using the powerful Force Push to send enemies flying before rushing in with Mace or Katana to finish them off. With your dog barking and growling at incoming foes alerting you to their imminent presence, you may even

## PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

Cute intro with dark climax

The Crucible – no snooker, just scrapping

What to do... what to do...



have time to ready your ranged weapon, and later you'll be able to target specific body parts. Which leads us to another tiny complaint – there really should be an Achievement for decapitating an assassin, and then racing his head to the bottom of a hill.

A game this good deserves one hell of an ending, and Lionhead delivers again, with a couple of genuine shocks, a real emotional gut-punch, a tear-jerkingly elegiac sequence, and yet another tough choice – perhaps the hardest of the lot. Fortunately, the decision of whether you buy Fable II is much easier. Needless to say, the score below should make your mind up if the review text hasn't done its job already. ●

Roll over screen for annotations



## 360Zine Verdict

*Molyneux's masterpiece – an incredibly engaging and emotional journey.*



Gloriously personal



Uproariously funny



Albion is a beautiful place to be

# 96%





YOU'VE GOT 6 FANTASTIC WORLDS TO EXPLORE,  
BUT AN UNLIMITED NUMBER OF WAYS  
TO ENJOY THE RIDE.



# BANJO-KAZOOIE

## NUTS & BOLTS

The dynamic duo are back in their most constructive adventure yet. Battling against the evil witch Gruntilda across 6 fantastic worlds, Banjo and Kazooie need you to help them build an amazing array of vehicles in order to overcome more than 150 challenges and secure the future of their homeland. It's going to be quite a ride.

Microsoft  
game studios

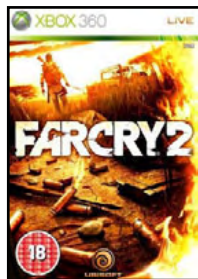


Jump in.

XBOX 360.







# Far Cry 2

*Blood Diamond*

**Publisher:** Ubisoft

**Developer:** Ubisoft

Montreal

**Heritage:** Far Cry Instincts

Predator, Tom Clancy's

Rainbow Six Vegas 2

**Link:** <http://farcry.ubi.com>

**OUT NOW**

**F**ar Cry 2 suffers from a gaming disease called Assassin's Creed Syndrome. ... it's a game that has a incredibly immersive gameworld, and then forgets to shove in a variety of interesting missions to do while you're there. It's equally fair to say that its free-roaming nature is a bit misleading, given that a large portion of the map isn't available from the outset, and alternative routes to waypoints aren't always possible thanks to the game being set in what appears to be the most mountainous area of Africa ever seen.

What's interesting about all this is that these problems don't actually matter too much in the grand scheme of things, unlike Altair's medieval murder-fest, because Far Cry 2 positively encourages freeform, off-the-cuff experimentation, allowing you to complete its admittedly pretty samey missions in a number of different ways. The fact that the enemy AI – once alerted – is generally extremely solid certainly helps matters. These are foes who will flank you, back off when under fire, and occasionally work

*"It's the mad, chaotic moments when Far Cry 2 is at its very best"*

together to surround you. Yet with so many options at your disposal, dealing with them becomes an intriguing battle of wits, leading to a variety in the combat that few FPSes can offer. You can scope out encampments from a distance with your monocular – tagging key points and enemy snipers on your map. Perhaps you might use a flare gun to spark a fire, and create a mass panic, picking off foes as they stagger away from the flames. Or you could try 'experimental' strategies – like a quick in-and-out, pausing only to stick an explosive on an enemy vehicle, then setting it off remotely as they all clamber in to chase you down.

It's in these mad, chaotic moments where Far Cry 2 is at its very best – where you're thinking quickly on your feet and adjusting your approach every few seconds, forced into mixing things up by an enemy that's more familiar with Africa than your just-flown-in merc. Even the injections of infuriating realism – guns which jam, the odd stumble as your malaria takes hold –



Safe houses provide refuge and a bed for you to advance time and recover. But you have to capture them first.



## POWER PLAY

*What makes Far Cry 2 such a forceful FPS?*



**Friends like these**



**Build 'em up**



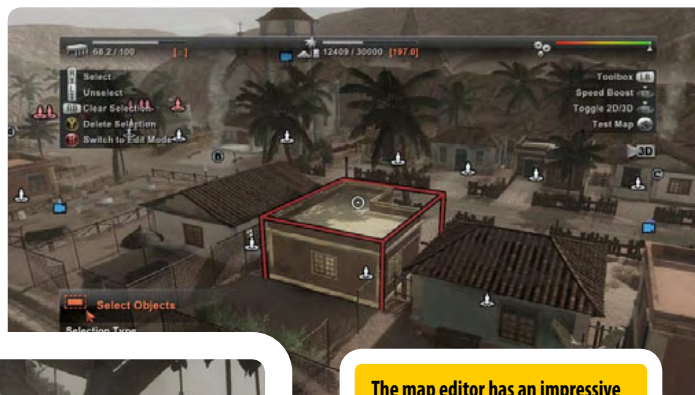
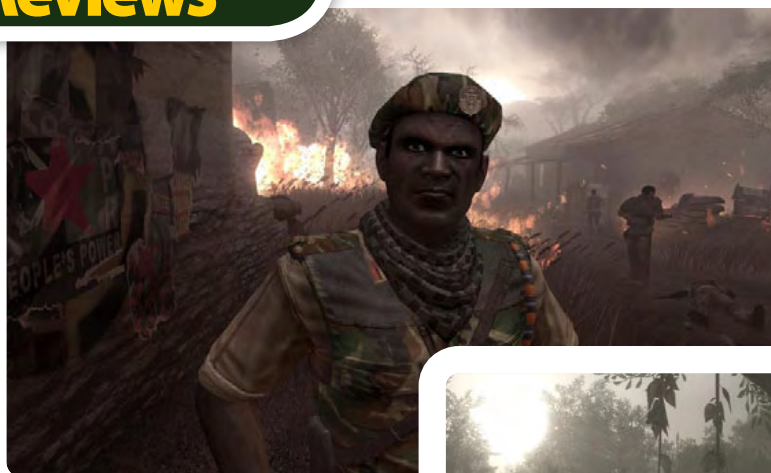
**Seek and destroy**



## Friends like these

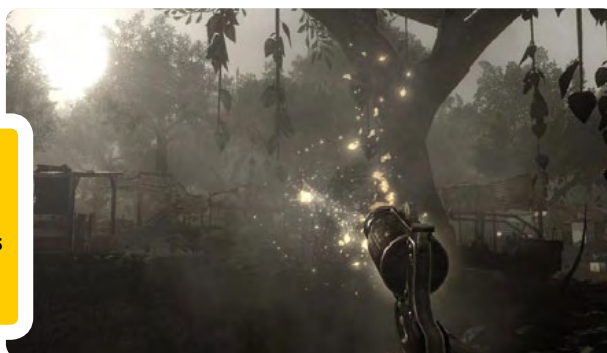
There are a number of perks to having a buddy – they can come in handy in a firefight, and some will come to rescue you if you're in trouble. They'll also offer different mission objectives for the story quests – sometimes involving going against the orders you've been given.





The map editor has an impressive array of options, but it never becomes overwhelming thanks to a simple, intuitive control setup.

Some think the gun jamming is a little overdone, but for us it makes the gunfights more frantic.



## > Far Cry 2 continued

make for a thrilling randomness which keeps things relatively fresh, even as you happen to stumble across your twentieth roadblock.

The game has a slightly stop-start nature, exacerbated by level design which doesn't allow you a different way past roadside patrols, making you abandon your vehicle temporarily, take out the guards, then pick up one of their own cars once they're all down. It's a pity, as you don't really get enough time to soak up the atmosphere as much as you'd like. Yet on the rare occasions you get to relax and take it all in, it's incredibly intoxicating. It's not just the graphics, either – the music subtly shifts between calming tunes and brutal beats when the combat kicks in, adding a heart-racing tension to encounters. And while the voice acting seems oddly flat and rushed, with almost every character seemingly in a

**"Far Cry 2 may not be perfect, but it's not an experience you'll soon forget"**

hurry to deliver their lines, it actually becomes strangely charming, and at least it's consistent.

Shamefully, we've not even mentioned the astounding map editor and sturdy multiplayer mode, but then there's almost too much to say about Far Cry 2. It may not be perfect, but it's not an experience you'll soon forget. And, more than anything, it shows exactly what Ubisoft Montreal is capable of, meaning this is one franchise in very safe hands indeed. ●

 Roll over screen for annotations






The ability to immediately jump in and playtest a level you're creating is a big help.



## 360Zine Verdict

Clout of Africa – this first-person shooter packs a real punch.

-  Magnificent graphics and sound
-  Exciting combat
-  Less freedom than expected

# 85%



# GUITAR HERO®

## WORLD TOUR

# UNLEASH YOUR INNER ROCKSTAR!



### WIRELESS GUITAR CONTROLLER:

Re-designed for the ultimate playing experience, including:

- Neck slider for nailing the most intense solos
- Dedicated star power button and re-designed controls for improved gameplay
- Interchangeable faceplates for customising your look\*
- Also compatible with Guitar Hero® games for the Xbox 360®



### WIRED MICROPHONE:

- Sing along using the mic and infuse your own style into the music

ROCK OUT ON THE GUITAR CONTROLLER  
OR ADD A DRUM KIT CONTROLLER AND A MIC  
FOR THE BAND EXPERIENCE

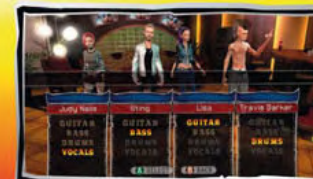
### WIRELESS DRUM KIT:

The most authentic drums available, including:

- Quiet surfaces so you can hear the music
- Pressure-sensitive pads allow creation of a wide range of sounds
- Authentic arrangement of the pads to mimic an actual drum set with raised cymbals



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



Create your own rocker, choose from your favourite Guitar Hero icons or take the stage as the biggest rock stars around.



Compose, record, edit, and share your own music online. Download and play community-created content for free! \*\*



Rock out solo, with another guitarist or with a band. Kick it up with 4 vs. 4 Battle of the Bands play. \*\*

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# Dead Space

*Event Surprisin'*

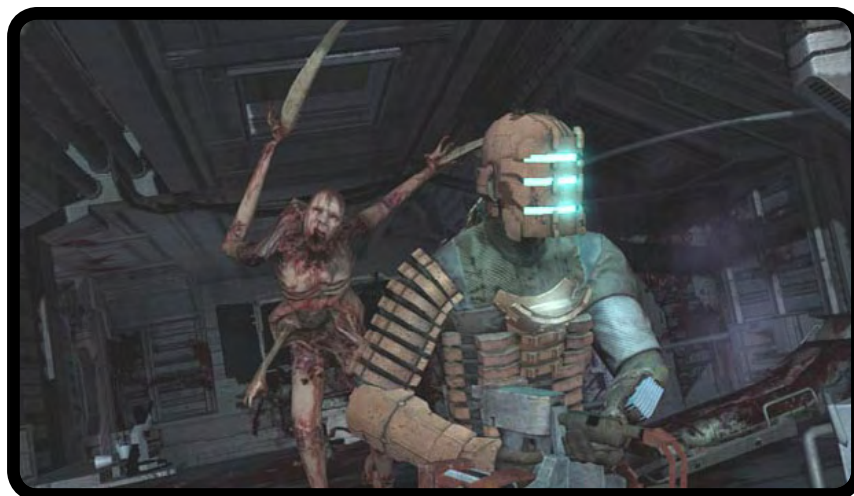
**Publisher:** Electronic Arts  
**Developer:** EA  
Redwood Shores  
**Heritage:** The Godfather,  
The Simpsons Game  
**Link:** <http://deadspace.ea.com>  
**OUT NOW**

Playing through Dead Space we were reminded of Doom 3 – transport that onto a spaceship and change the first-person view to a third-person one and you're not far off what Dead Space is like. It even has audio files as people desperately record their last thoughts for posterity before being sliced to ribbons by the creatures skittering around the USG Ishimura.

Doom 3 isn't the only influence on Dead Space, however. It certainly owes a debt to Resident Evil, while it pinches from films such as Alien, The Thing and Event Horizon. It's occasionally a

Frankenstein's monster of a game – its elements stitched together in an inventive but unlovely way. Yet once it breaks free from those self-enforced constraints and incorporates its own ideas, the game starts to forge its own identity, emerging as an original survival horror experience.

It gets off to an incredible start, as the team sent to intercept the distress signal sent by the stricken Ishimura, crash-land while docking, and emerge into a craft where something has clearly gone terribly wrong. Sent to do a routine bit of engineering,



*"Dead Space does its best to keep you on the edge of your seat"*



Melee combat is clumsy, but suitably so. Isaac swings wildly at enemies that have got too close and struggling to push them away when they grab on.

protagonist Isaac Clarke is separated from the rest of his team as they and he are simultaneously attacked by the Necromorphs – horrible alien/human hybrids, whose vicious initial assault leaves just three characters alive in Isaac and crewmates Kendra and Zach.

## Star trek

Many of the game's missions involve trekking back and forth through corridors at the behest of the other two survivors, and this is the game's biggest problem. The toing and froing soon become tiresome and repetitive, and though the game introduces additional powers to add a dash of variety, the game overstays its welcome – a brilliant seven-hour game padded out to a still-enjoyable 12.

Yet the disappointment you'll feel is fleeting, because Dead Space does its best to keep you on the edge of your seat. Its scare tactics are perhaps a little obvious – if you see a shiny item lying at the end of a corridor, you know to expect a Necromorph attack before you get there, or just as you pick it up

## ENEMY IN A STATE

*Necromorphology for beginners*



**Fright young thing**



**Gunner be messy**



**Hit the spot**



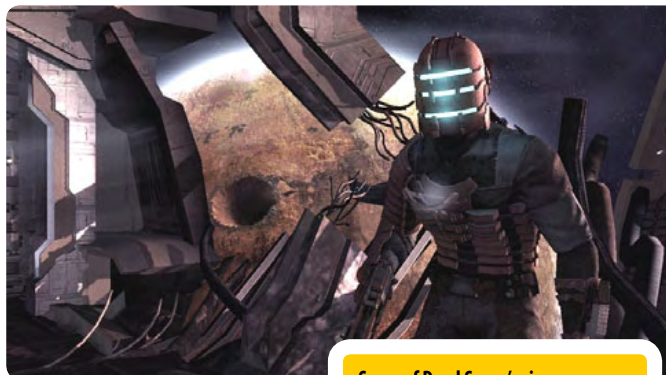
## Fright young thing

The babies are nippy little nippers, using their tentacles to motor towards you before attempting to grab your face – their tentacles need to be blasted away to kill them. Another slightly larger critter will bring any corpses back to life, so they have to be disposed of immediately.





Venture outside the hull and you'll have Isaac's air supply to worry about as well.



Some of Dead Space's views are breathtaking – you might not think the graphics can top the superb opening but it does, time and again.



Many of the Necromorphs are mutated Ishimura crew members, which adds a tragic tinge to the bloody violence.



The game has a few boss battles, though not until you're almost halfway through.

***"While there's nothing here that'll haunt your dreams, it's hard to say it's not scary"***

use of sound. It's no exaggeration to say that Dead Space has some of the best sound design ever heard in a videogame, with the Ishimura lurching and groaning, and metallic clanks as the Necromorphs clatter around, ready to emerge from God-knows-where. Ultimately, it's this sense of immersion that overcomes Dead Space's few minor issues, making this a sterling start to a potentially Resi-beating franchise. ●

## > Dead Space continued

– but if that makes it a one-trick pony, then it's a damned effective trick. You'll be leaping like a particularly agitated salmon as these disturbing creatures drop from ceilings and run screeching towards you. Instead of killing them with a traditional shot to the head however, you'll need to dismember them with your plasma cutter. The limb-lopping adds a strategic edge to the combat, though you can also whack Necromorphs with melee attacks should they get too close.

Such moments are frantic, gory, and heart-thumpingly exciting, and while there's nothing here that will haunt your dreams, it's hard to say it's not scary. That's partly thanks to the wonderful atmosphere – in part created by some excellent graphical design (including some inspired use of your spacesuit's capabilities to provide essential info without the need for an intrusive HUD) but mainly thanks to the

## 360Zine Verdict

*A scary, atmospheric treat.*

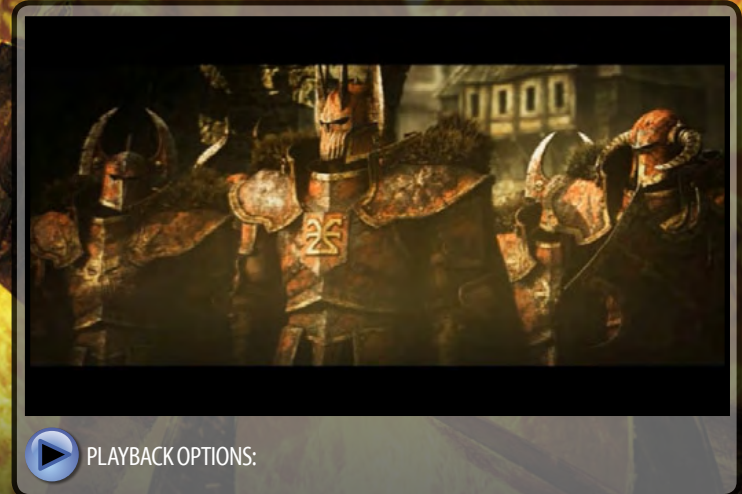
- 👍 Astonishing sound design
- 👍 Inventive Zero-G sections
- 👎 Feels padded out; repetitive missions

# 84%



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# Xbox Live Arcade Round-Up

Another thrilling three available for download today...

## Still Alive

Developer: Valve  
Publisher: Microsoft Price: 1200 MP (~£10.20)

Anyone who bought The Orange Box last year – and if not, shame on you – will be familiar with the main part of the offering here. Portal is a first-person puzzle-adventure set in the Half-Life universe which sees your test subject pitting her wits against the imperious GLaDOS – a possibly malevolent robot host whose ‘help’ may actually be more of a hindrance to your progress. It’s absolutely pitch-perfect – glorious design, fabulous writing and puzzles that graduate from clever to bloody ingenious. Even if you’ve not played it by now, you’ll surely be familiar with the end credits song – Jonathan Coulton’s brilliant ‘Still Alive’, which gives this expansion its title.

So at 1200 points it’s an absolute bargain, though if you’ve not played it you’re probably better off with The Orange Box, which packages it with one of the most tactical team-based multiplayer games ever made in Team Fortress 2, and the entire Half-Life 2 series so far. And you can probably get that on the cheap these days. All Still Alive offers on top of the original



Portal is a series of extra levels, few of which are as impressive as what’s in the game, and all of which are available on the PC for free.

So while reviewing Portal: Still Alive is relatively easy, scoring it is quite difficult. The mark below is based on the assumption that you’ve never played Portal and are remarkably averse to the first-person shooter genre but don’t mind shooting guns that open

portals rather than fire bullets. Given Live Arcade’s appeal to casual gamers, there may be a few people who get their minds blown anew. A Gold Award it is, then.

- As brilliant as ever
- Two hours of new stuff
- No GLaDOS in add-on stages

Essential for newcomers

92%



## Banjo Kazooie

Developer: 4J Studios  
Publisher: Microsoft Price: 1200 MP (~£10.20)

Microsoft has decided it’s high time it revisited Banjo Kazooie, a game which many felt rivalled Super Mario 64 as the N64’s best platformer in 1998. Evidently 10 years is a long time in gaming, because what once seemed fresh and different is really starting to show its age. If we’re honest, we never thought Banjo quite lived up to Mario’s design genius, and post-Galaxy (and even post-Ratchet) this HD-enhanced adventure feels slightly archaic. It’s not a disaster, and it’s an interesting look at how things used to be, but you’re best spending your 1200 points elsewhere.

- New hi-def visuals
- Some fun platforming
- Feels old and repetitive

Out of time

68%

## Age of Booty

Developer: Certain Affinity  
Publisher: Capcom  
Price: 800 MP (~£6.80)

A piratical strategy set on a board of hexagonal tiles, Age of Booty offers plenty of swashbuckling enjoyment – at least if you’re playing other human players over Live. Offline, it’s not quite as enjoyable, with computer-controlled allies proving little help, while opponents seem to always have the upper hand thanks to near-constant respawns. Still, you can always turn the difficulty down a notch, and it’s a really quite beautifully presented little game. At 400 points it’d be an essential purchase, but at this price you might want to think again.



- Hugely addictive
- Satisfyingly strategic
- Too awkward on your own

Decent buccaneering fun

77%



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In **360Zine** Issue 25

# CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

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The screenshot shows the N4G website interface with a navigation bar, a 'Hot Stories' section featuring articles like 'Neocrosis: IGN changed the Fallout 3...' and 'Resistance 2's Street date has been broken', and a sidebar with 'N4G User Blogs' and a 'NEW FROM VALVE' banner.





# GEARS OF WAR 2

THE MAGAZINE

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF 360ZINE, THE FREE XBOX 360 MAGAZINE

EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST 

# GEARS OF WAR 2

Every level played from start to finish!

INTERVIEW 

**CLIFF BLESZINSKI**

Get the lowdown on GOW2 from the man himself...



INTERVIEW 

**MIKE CAPPS**

Epic's president discusses GOW2 and beyond...





# WELCOME

It's not every day you get the opportunity to play one of the year's most anticipated games over a month before its release, but we got that chance with Gears of War 2, and grabbed it with both hands. Quite literally, in a way – we managed to get prime spot in front of the one giant telly at the Microsoft event, and proceeded to blast through the first few acts of the single-player game before anyone else. Dedication to our cause saw us blitz most of the rest of the game throughout the night, resting for but a couple of hours before resuming hostilities with the Locust and finishing the following morning, with a completion time of around twelve hours.

So yes, it's longer than the first game, and we're sure most players will take a little more time than was afforded to the attendant journalists. With the campaign done and dusted, we then played several hours of the game's multiplayer modes, joining forces with Epic's Dr. Mike Capps, and being congratulated for a double grenade kill that he described as "beautiful", taking on the Locust during one particularly satisfying game of Execution single-handedly.

So it's fair to say we're in a prime position to reveal all about Gears of War 2 – and exactly how it compares to the much-celebrated original. Embargoes forbid us from rating the game, but suffice to say this extensive preview is the result of exhaustive playtesting of the final version. Would it get a Gold Award? The next issue of 360Zine will carry our final verdict, but for now you'll just have to read on and see what you think...

Enjoy the issue,

Chris Schilling

"At around twelve hours, Gears 2's campaign is longer than the original"

## Contents

### Playtest 03

We've played through the entire single-player campaign and spent hours on multiplayer too.

### Cliff Bleszinski 06

Cliffy B talks us through the thrills and spills of the GOW sequel.

### Mike Capps 12

Don't miss our video interview with the president of Epic.



GEARS OF WAR 2 Click here to watch the video!





HANDS ON

# GEARS OF WAR 2

Played to completion – will this be 2008's greatest game?

**Publisher:**

Microsoft Game Studios

**Developer:**

Epic Games

**Heritage:**

Unreal Tournament series, Gears of War

**Link:** <http://gearsofwar.xbox.com/>

**ETA:** 7th November

**W**hen we spoke to Cliff Bleszinski last month, he explained how his assertion that Gears of War 2 was “bigger, better and more badass” was just marketing speak. But it's hard to see a summary that's any more appropriate than that. We've played Gears 2 from awesome opening to ferocious, frantic finish, and it is indeed bigger, and better, and more badass than the first. Pound-for-pound, it's undoubtedly

superior to the original, with enough new in there to make it feel very much like Gears 2.0 rather than just Gears 1.5.

**CAMPAIGN TRAIL**

Epic is clearly keen to talk about the game's story – a much criticised aspect of the original, which forewent a truly compelling narrative to focus purely on its fast-paced tactical action sequences and exciting set-pieces. We admit that we feared the plot might become a little too intrusive, getting in the way of more Locust-blasting action, but we can quell those worries immediately – while there's plenty of mythology-expanding, universe-building content, a driving narrative arc, and even a few sombre moments, it's still very much action first, story second. Indeed, given the amount of talk about the role of Dominic Santiago and the search for his wife Maria



Skorge is a fearsome opponent, but do you get to fight him? Well, that would be telling...

*“Pound-for-pound, it's undoubtedly superior to the original”*



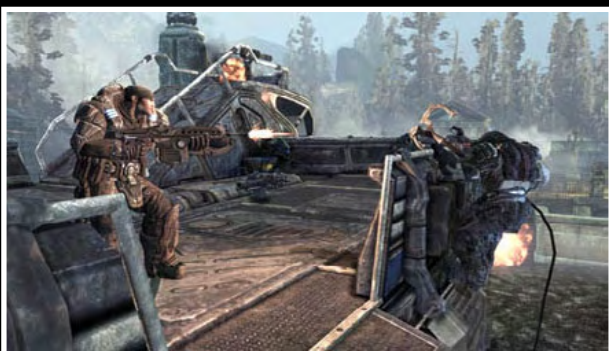
An early set piece sees you taking on Locust atop the deadly flying Reavers

**EXCLUSIVE SCREENSAVER**



# Thrills, spills and kills

What's new in Gears 2



Vehicles

Maps

Weapons

## Vehicles

Strictly speaking, most of Gears 2's vehicles aren't really vehicles, as they have legs rather than wheels. During the single-player campaign you'll witness the Locust riding bloodmounts, Reavers and even Brumaks – and you'll have access to the latter two during the game. One memorable sequence sees you taking to the water in a Locust barge, while you'll also travel in a vehicle that's almost a cross between a tank and a monster truck. Then there are the huge rigs which transport you to the drilling point, where you'll travel through the earth in grindlifts, ready to take the fight to the Locust... underground.

### > Gears of War 2 continued

becoming the emotional anchor of the plot, some players will be surprised that it doesn't feature more heavily.

#### WAR STORIES

Bleszinski always talked about giving gamers the choice of following the story or skipping the cutscenes (and even cutting short some of Marcus's radio conversations with Control) but we're confident that most will invest in the narrative to the finish – at least first time round. So no Kojima-length story sequences, just an

interesting story to propel the action. And those spending some time wandering down the road less travelled will find items to be added to their war journal – diary entries, COG tags and more that flesh out

the background to the Gears universe, and obviously offer replay value for completists.

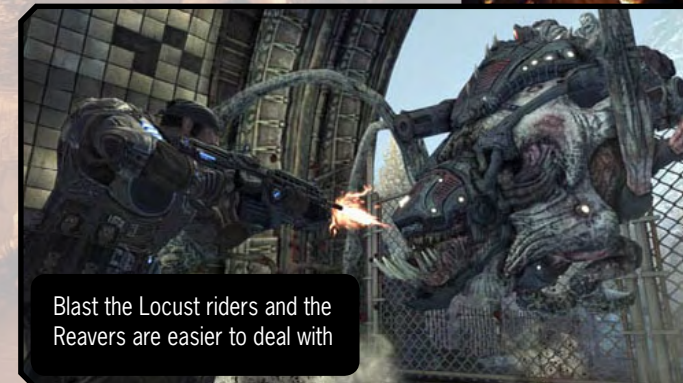
As far as plot details go, our lips have to remain pretty firmly sealed. Not only are we unable to talk about much of the overall story arc, but we'd be unwilling to anyway, as we'd undoubtedly spoil some of the game's biggest surprises. It's fair to say that events don't necessarily progress as you

"No Kojima-length cutscenes, just a compelling story to drive the action"

Fighting atop a moving rig against Brumaks is an early highlight. But you'll be getting even closer to the beasts in the final Act...



GEARS OF WAR 2 Click here to watch the video!



Blast the Locust riders and the Reavers are easier to deal with



&gt; Gears of War 2 continued

# PARTY OF FIVE

Why you'll all be playing Horde this Christmas

There's nothing that says 'festive' more than chainsawing a Locust to tiny, bloody pieces, but that's not the only reason that many, many Xbox 360 owners will find themselves addicted to Horde, arguably the finest and most addictive of Gears 2's new online modes. It's Epic's way of compensating for the lack of a four-player co-operative campaign mode – indeed, it supports a fifth human player, too – and it's pulse-quickeningly intense, breath-snatchingly brilliant, and very, very hard indeed. In many ways, it's as basic as they come – merely offering waves of Locust enemies, gradually increasing in size and number – but it soon reveals itself to be a game of remarkable tactical depth. Because it's so tough, you'll need to rely on all your team-mates to get through each wave – players will take different positions on the map and attempt to hold their ground while yelling warnings to others. High positions offer the opportunity to thin numbers out from a distance with sniper rifles and other long-range weaponry, while also providing a vantage point to gauge enemy locations and movement. Stay on the ground, and you might be able to pick up useful Locust weapons to use against your foes,

while you can execute any seriously wounded enemies with a swift melee attack. There's a very definite difficulty hump as you reach each tenth wave – after that enemies get stronger, withstanding more attacks, but they won't increase in number. But either way, reaching that fiftieth wave is going to take some doing, even on Casual difficulty. At the time of writing no-one at Epic has finished the mode – we're sure some talented gamer will manage it on Insane difficulty one day, but it's going to take some serious hardcore skills to get to that stage.



*"Horde is intense, brilliant and very, very hard"*

might think – while we're allowed to say that the COG armies are fighting back against the Locust as they attempt to protect the last remaining human stronghold of Jacinto, the resolution – as with the outcome of the Dom/Maria subplot – will be predicted by very few players indeed. It's testament to writer Josh Ortega that the deeper story doesn't feel too incongruous – while Dom's initial pining for his missing wife seems a little out of place and character for a man who barely mentioned her in



Fallen enemies can be used as temporary meat shields



Well-timed shots into explosive barrels can be more effective than bursts of Lancer fire directly at your enemies



## > Gears of War 2 continued

the first iteration, the game soon settles into a nice rhythm, integrating short sections of narrative into the stages pretty effectively and seamlessly. Put it this way: you'll rarely have chance to put down the pad for more than a minute at a time.

### WORLD IN CONFLICT

When the game begins, you're once again taking control of Delta Squad, attempting to take the fight to the Locust, who are sinking entire cities (and you'll find out fairly soon how that's happening – but we're not telling). If you're new to the game, you can take newcomer Private

*"You feel much more part of an epic war this time"*

Benjamin Carmine out on a brief tour of duty which doubles as the tutorial, and immediately after that it's straight into the action. While Gears focused on relatively small scale battles against enemy Locust with the occasional fight against larger beasts, you feel much more part of an epic war this time round.

Before Act One is over, you'll have already tackled several flying, tentacled Reavers and taken down

some Brumaks along the way. Those bemoaning the latter's omission from the original (particularly once it was reinstated in the PC version) will no doubt be delighted that you won't just get to battle one, but several – and you'll even get to ride into battle atop a Brumak during the latter stages.

Indeed, Gears 2 is definitely more of a creature feature than the original, introducing several new enemy types to ramp up the variety. Among the most memorable are the Tickers – small, skittery suicide bombers, who'll scuttle up towards Delta Squad and detonate the explosives on their backs.

One early highlight



New team member Tai is a huge, powerful tattooed Maori



The blood and gore is messier than ever before – those chainsaw kills are even more gleefully nasty

## INTERVIEW

# SQUAD LEADER

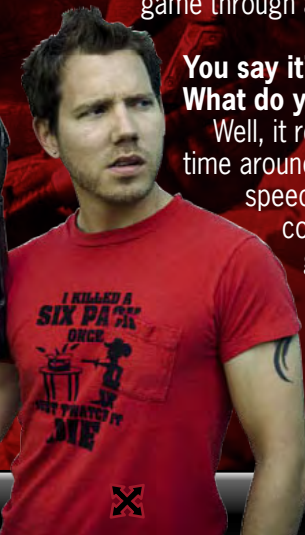
**H**aving helmed the first Gears, Epic Games' Design Director Cliff Bleszinski has been in charge of Delta Squad for several years now. We caught up with him recently to ask him about the changes facing Marcus Fenix and co, and his thoughts about videogaming in general

**The original Gears felt very streamlined. Given the size of the budget and the increased number of people working on the game, has it been difficult to stop it getting bloated?**

Oh, like featureitis, things like that? I think it's just a matter of keeping focused – it's not like we at Epic have quadrupled our team size. We've probably increased by 33 to 45 percent over the last couple of years, and of course not all those people were working on Gears, some were working on Unreal Tournament 3 and whatnot. So we've grown a bit but not that significantly, and we kind of kept our wits about us regarding the kind of game we were going to make. And not wanting to feature creep, you know. Yes, we have a party system, we have great new executions, we have Horde and things like that, but it's still Gears – a tactical, cover-based action game through and through.

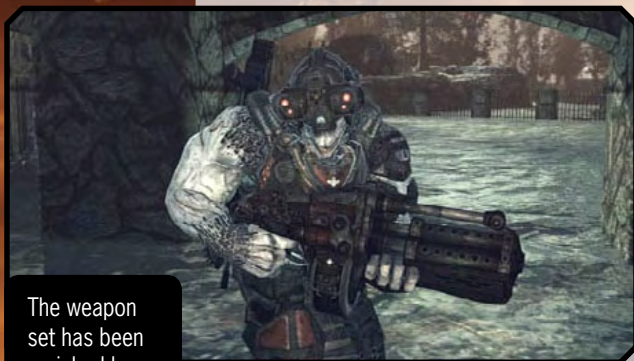
**You say it's "epic yet intimate". What do you mean by that?**

Well, it really feels like a war this time around – with the chairman's speech, seeing the armoured columns getting ready to go into Landown, and drill down and take on the Locust, things like that. But it's also very much a personal story. I mean, I





## &gt; Gears of War 2 continued



The weapon set has been enriched by a few new additions

sees you tackling a large group of these in a darkened tunnel, illuminated only by the lights on the transport rig behind you, and that effectively represents the difference between Gears 2 and the original – it's not afraid to really mix things up, and while not everything comes off – there's a short vehicle section which is pretty woeful – it's a small price to

pay for the effort Epic has expended in ensuring the action remains constantly varied.

**WEIRD SCIENCE**

There's a level which gives a whole new meaning to the phrase 'belly of the beast', while one extraordinary section has you creeping around a disused scientific facility, ratcheting up the tension to almost unbearable levels before an explosion of extended, astoundingly intense violence provides the eventual release. We fully expect that some players will be talking about such

*"Some players will be talking about the highlights for years to come"*

moments for years to come. There may be a slight dip in Act IV – though the slower pace is very deliberate, given that one whole stage is dedicated to a significant plot development – but Bleszinski and co turn all the dials to 11 for the climax, with one blistering on-rails sequence which plays homage to Return of the Jedi, but provides more excitement than Lucas's similar set piece ever did. Which is a little ironic given that Gears 2 feels like Epic's Empire Strikes Back – a darker, more complex and interesting game than the first – which offers a few moments of levity, but feels like a more mature and accomplished work throughout.

That's not to say that it's



One of four melee attacks can be performed when you're standing over a floored enemy. Punching is the least gory, but arguably the most satisfying

## &gt; Interview continued

love big sci-fi experiences, but I'm also a big softie deep down – I love movies like Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind – to have Dom looking at this picture [of him and wife Maria] and holding it up, to see a big tough guy like that have these little cracks in his personality I think adds a little humanity that you don't see a lot of in a sci-fi shooter. And that's something that we're really going for this time around - yeah it's a little risky, but I think it's pretty damn compelling

**Why is Dom the focus of this particular story and not Marcus?**

Dom was very much chosen for this and that was intentional because when you create a videogame like this and you have a primary character, it's usually better to err on the side of caution for your primary guy in regards to the amount of personality he has. There's a reason why Gordon Freeman doesn't say anything ever, there's a reason why Master Chief doesn't say very much, there's a reason why Marcus isn't a chatty kind of guy – it's because the majority of players are projecting themselves onto this character. And the fact that Dom is the second player and he's along with Marcus - we can start playing with his emotions a little bit more, and leverage that, and that's definitely by design.

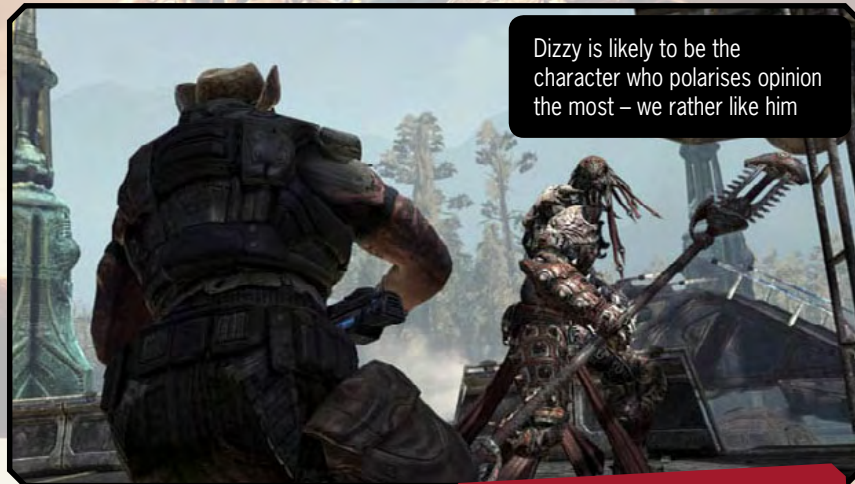
**Is it fair to say the game has a more sombre tone to it than last time round?**

Well, it's definitely darker. Sombre is not a word that's been used a lot but it's an adequate way to describe it. Any time you create a world like this, of course there are moments of levity and things like that – that's what the Cole Train is for, and whatnot. But you have to take some things seriously. If we don't take this world seriously, or the fact that humanity and this planet is struggling to survive – this man's lost his wife, his kids are dead, and everyone's lost something since the Locust have attacked, and this world has been at war for multiple



## > Gears of War 2 continued

unafraid to go old-school on occasion though – indeed, some of Gears 2's finest moments are where it most closely apes the frenetic, small-scale conflicts of the original, pitting your two or four-man team against small but significant groups of Locust. The only differences here are in the enemies you'll face and the weapons you'll use – a few more of each makes for some surprising tactical changes. The huge but slow Maulers carry shields and wield



Dizzy is likely to be the character who polarises opinion the most – we rather like him

*“Some of Gears 2's finest moments are where it apes the small-scale conflicts of the original”*

maces that almost take you down in one hit, though once down, you'll be able to pick up the former for your own protection, with your free hand wielding whichever pistol you have equipped.

The Grinders (rather appropriately) yell “GRIND” shortly before unleashing a volley of shots from the chaingun-like Mulcher, which can also be picked up –



## > Interview continued

generations... I think that's one of the problems with videogame movies, is that they don't take their videogame world very seriously. It's like “wink wink, hey, it's a videogame, whatever”, and that's a shame. But it is sombre, and it's a little sad in parts.

### Would you say part of that is related to real world issues?

I think any good sci-fi extrapolates from real world themes – moments in history or current events, that sort of thing, and there's a lot of that in Gears, but, I don't like throwing it in people's faces – I think if they get it out of the game, good, but if they don't, that's okay, I don't want it to get in the way, I don't want whatever my political agenda is to be sticking in people's faces or anything like that. It just feels like something's preaching, or like propaganda. I think any political angle we use in Gears is in the background. Real world metaphors are very much secondary – you know, war over an energy source, I mean, it's not a very thinly-veiled metaphor. An enemy that uses more technology from the underground, that's kind of like the Vietcong, right? So it's there, but it's secondary to the chainsaws that people always notice first.

### You've mentioned recently the need to simplify game controls a little more – is that something you'd like to tackle with the Gears franchise, or are you thinking more of other games?

Well, when I was talking about simplifying controls I was talking about console controllers featuring fewer buttons – we could honestly maybe do Gears with one less button, possibly two. I just believe that context-sensitivity is an incredibly important way of working round things in the game, and I think future consoles will have more features like cameras that are built in, and microphones, certain motion sensors and things like that can supplement the ever-growing amount of buttons you get on controllers. I just don't always think you need every single button





## > Gears of War 2 continued

albeit with difficulty – by Marcus. It can be fired from the hip or hoisted up onto cover, with walls and sandbags taking the weight while you turn Locust enemies into bloody

Gears 2 is incredibly cinematic even when you're fully in control

meat paste. Mortars offer the opportunity to take out larger enemies much quicker – slam it into the ground and hold down the trigger button until your shot reaches the required distance – while poison grenades offer distraction and destruction.

You'll now be able to crawl when downed, with a short window of opportunity to move back into cover and get revived by your partner – though you need to be wary that the Locust can do this, too. To prevent that from happening, you can choose from one of four melee attacks – executed with the face buttons - to finish them off as they

struggle to reach safety, or you can grab them to use as a temporary meat shield.

### MEAN FLAG

The differences in combat are most keenly felt in the multiplayer modes – again, Epic has outdone itself here, providing a host of new game types without compromising on quality. The idea of taking a Locust hostage has been explored in Submission (originally titled Meat Flag before Microsoft intervened) which is essentially a Capture the Flag variant where the flag happens to be a COG soldier or a Locust.

It's a game which gets rather chaotic, as dragging your opponent slows you down immensely, forcing team-mates to provide protection – or simply a temporary barrier – as you attempt the journey back



*"Epic has outdone itself in multiplayer, with a host of new game modes"*

A few sections are essentially on rails, but they're every bit as enjoyable as the familiar 'stop and pop' sequences

## > Interview continued

to be used and every finger doesn't need to be active. I think in some ways that was one of the issues with accessibility of PC games back in the day. And that if your game came with a placard that showed what every single button did, then you weren't making a game at that point, you were making a sim – something for the hardcore which ultimately limits your audience.

**With that in mind, with the new Casual difficulty in this game, did you consider trying to implement an even simpler control scheme?**

Well, I'll be honest – when you play Casual, you can probably get by without taking much cover. Because it's that easy. It's only when you get into Normal, and of course Hardcore and Insane that cover becomes very necessary...

**So there are a lot of buttons you wouldn't necessarily need to use?**

I think it just kind of cascades out of it with Casual, the way you can just run up to enemies and kill them, and just meander through the game, stumbling through it, and probably not needing to use cover or the roadie run – and that just naturally simplifies the game. Your average newbie gamer has a tough enough time with two sticks as it is.



CONTROL →





## > Gears of War 2 continued



Scorchers look pretty awesome, but the flamethrower isn't the most effective addition to your arsenal

Venture into the wilds at night, and you're asking for trouble.

"Gears 2 offers just about everything you could want from a sequel"

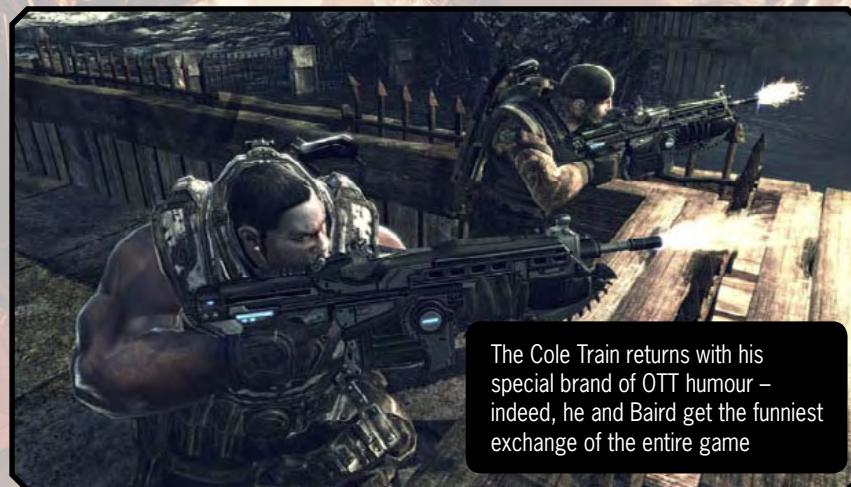
to base. There's a brand new King of the Hill mode, too – while Wingman is a xenophobe's dream, as you're joined by a clone, with the objective simply being to kill whoever doesn't look like you. We've spoken about the superb Horde mode already – suffice to say the increasingly large waves of Locust make for some thrillingly intense backs-to-the-wall moments for your five-man team.

Meanwhile, Guardian offers a slight tweak to Assassination from the first game, where enemies respawn until the team leader is killed. There are nine maps to choose from – some of which employ environmental effects to spice things up – and revamps of

five arenas from the original available as a free download to those who buy the game brand new. A better party system and numerous options to customise your experience are just the icing on the cake.

### GREAT EXPECTATIONS

So: bigger? Yes. Better? Definitely. More badass? Absolutely. Gears 2 offers just about everything you could possibly want from a sequel – and provides a whole lot of stuff you almost certainly weren't expecting. Game of the Year? It's too early to call – but based on our experiences, it's going to be nestling near the top of most critics' top tens come December 31st. ●



The Cole Train returns with his special brand of OTT humour – indeed, he and Baird get the funniest exchange of the entire game



# FENIX DOWN

## Does a darker tone suit Gears?

While the original Gears was hardly all candy canes and puppy dogs it never felt quite as bleak as end-of-the-world sci-fi often can. That's because it was a pretty gung-ho actioner, with the script only infrequently touching on the human cost of war. Meanwhile, characters like the Cole Train brought significant levity to the script with plenty of whooping and hollering, his rapid-fire trash-talking providing plenty of humour throughout proceedings.

It's fair to say that Gears 2 is a very different beast in that respect. That's not to say that it doesn't have lighter moments – many gamers will be pleased to hear that Cole returns and is in fine (bellowing) voice as ever – but the general tone is darker and more emotional. That's not to say that you'll be shedding any tears – that may be what Epic hopes, but we'd be surprised if certain events give you any more than a slight lump in your throat. But the story is definitely successful in making you think about the wider consequences of the war against the Locust.

In our extensive preview in this special issue, we talk of how Gears feels very much like an Empire Strikes Back moment for the franchise – it's more complex, and deals with more adult themes than its predecessor, and in a mature fashion to boot. But it's important to note that the time spent on the relationship between Dominic Santiago and his wife Maria is roughly equivalent to the space given to the

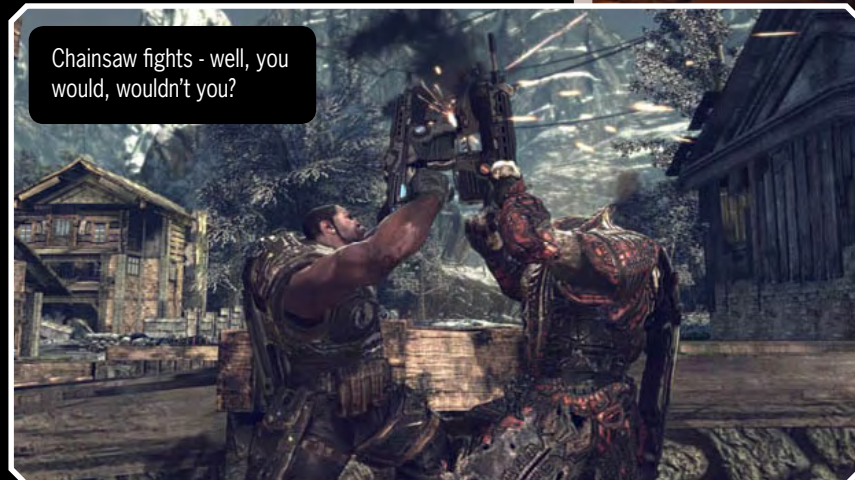
Han/Leia subplot in Empire. Which is to say that, while it's a key ingredient in the narrative, it hardly dominates the game like some feared it might.

Much more than the first game, the humour feels like a release – a tension-reliever meant to relax the player. It's telling that most of these sections come either just after or prior to a particularly intense battle or set-piece, and increasingly it seems like Delta Squad's own way of dealing with the situation. Rather than jarring against the serious themes the game explores, it actually complements them – and the script's light sprinkling of humour ensures it never feels crass or insensitive. Indeed, one moment deftly references an oft-criticised fault with the first game in such an effective manner that it genuinely made us laugh out loud.

Yet those concerned that the plot might get in the way should stop worrying – it's not a replacement for the intense third-person shooter gameplay, merely a device that both drives the action and encourages you to keep playing. And the pacing is just about immaculate – it's not until you play other games that you realise just how spot-on Gears' mix of story and gameplay is. It blends short, sharp shocks of action with sections that force you to adopt a slower, more measured approach to combat. Vehicle sequences rub shoulders with traditional stop-and-pop battles. Open areas follow tight, enclosed spaces. And just

"The pacing is immaculate – Gears' mix of story and gameplay is spot on"

Chainsaw fights - well, you would, wouldn't you?



when you think it's settled into a rhythm, you'll be handed a story revelation, a boss battle, even a more puzzle-based stage, and all bets are off once more.

We won't reveal just yet whether Gears 2 has a happy ending, but we're convinced that it suits its darker clothes just fine. And with plenty of sobering background story provided by collectable COG tags, diary entries and other human detritus worth scouting out in the nooks and crannies of each level, it's all the motivation you need to really kick some Locust ass. ○



GEARS OF WAR 2

EXCLUSIVE  
DESKTOPS

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INTERVIEW

# DOCTOR IN 'THE HOUSE'

Epic's president talks tech, Gears, and looks to the company's future

**P**resident of Epic Games, Dr. Mike Capps, flew into London recently to talk about Gears of War 2. We caught up with him for a lengthy chat about what it's like to create one of the biggest gaming blockbusters of the year...

**Gears 1 was always set up to be a big hit – it was intended to be the game equivalent of a Hollywood blockbuster from day one. Even with that in mind, were you surprised at just how successful it was?**

Oh yeah, I mean we were scared to death. We were overhyped really, coming into 2006. We were really

scared everyone would get it and say "oh, you know, it doesn't also give me sliced bread and give me

great gas mileage, f\*\*k this", so yeah, we were really glad that everyone liked it, and that it



Gears 2 takes 'destroyed beauty' to new levels, with vastly improved lighting and much more environmental detail



Dr. Mike Capps is one of the figureheads of the current-gen technological revolution



CONTROL →





## > Gears of War 2 continued

stood up to the hype.

### What exactly do you think made gamers respond to it in such a positive way?

Well, visuals are a very big part of picking a game up for the first time. I feel like we set the bar for next-generation gaming. That's what everybody wanted their 360 and their PlayStation to do, and so that got a lot of focus. And then we just had a really cool, intimate experience, with good pacing. We

had some good breaks in the middle, and really high action scenes and moments giving you a chance to rest. It's like an action movie – if you get the pacing right, then it's a lot of fun.

### Were you ever concerned about the level of violence in the game? And did you consider that the game could be criticised for that?

Oh, all the time, yeah. Microsoft, as you can imagine, had some concerns about our game because we were setting the standard for

### EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



MIKE CAPPS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW Watch the full interview here on the page. Enjoy!

*"This is our serious toned game - humanity is on its last leg"*

The COG troops take the fight to the Locust – which means going underground

Mature gaming at the time. So it was a little scary, but we decided to make the game we wanted to make and play - and we figured it's made for 18 and up, parents should know better than to buy Gears for their six-year-old kid for Christmas, and we just hope the rating system works. There's been some backlash, there are some stores we can't sell it in, and folks who don't like our advertising campaigns and won't run them, but overall I think I'd rather have the game that's cooler.

The first game was a little more gung-ho in terms of its story,

while the second has a bit more of a sombre tone – is that a reaction to the changing views of war in the interim?

Hmm, yeah. I mean, the cowboy American stereotype is not particularly popular worldwide, you know. And this is our serious toned game - humanity is on its last leg, right? I mean, we're barely surviving. We're worried about gathering enough food to keep people alive, it's not really a "woo-hoo!" game. But that said, we try to mix it up with some funny [moments], and some good old-fashioned action.





## > Gears of War 2 continued

**Has it been difficult to balance the human aspect of the game – as Dom searches for his missing wife – with the visceral nature of the action? Was it a risk that one could compromise the other?**

Yeah, I mean we've always been worried - by telling what is, in essence, boiling it down, a love story as well as a story of hope and redemption - that it could take away from the action. So we were very careful to make sure that our cinematics [fit] – Dom doesn't sit there and cry like a little girl, he hits a car and gets mad when he's upset about not being able to find his wife. These are tough soldiers

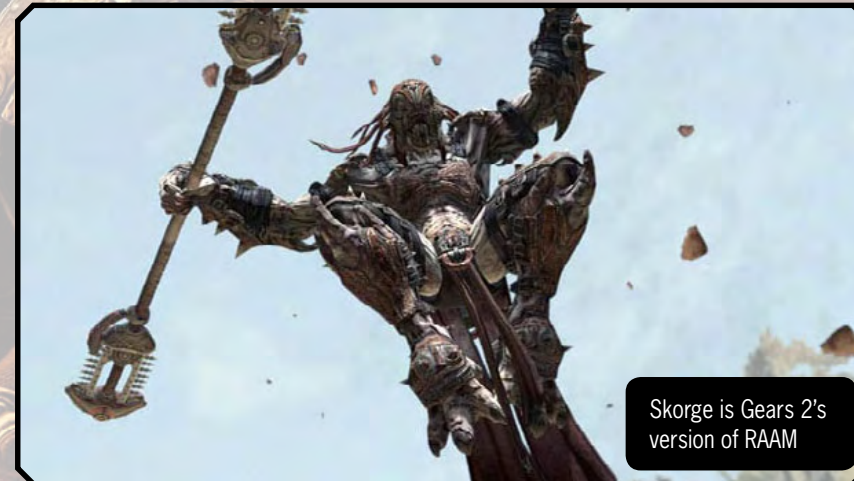
Ironically, while the tone of the game is darker, the graphics aren't nearly as gloomy thanks to improved lighting

in the middle of the worst war ever who are dealing with human emotions.

**The Unreal Engine tech has advanced significantly in the years between the first Gears and its sequel – has that been the key to making a game that's very definitely Gears 2.0 and not just Gears 1.5?**

Oh, that's a great question. Sure, technology is a big part of Gears 2 being separated from Gears 1. It's

*"Dom doesn't cry like a little girl – he hits a car and gets angry when he's upset"*



Skorge is Gears 2's version of RAAM

the same box, there's only so much we can do from a technology perspective. We can make more optimal use of the graphics hardware and the CPUs, but at the end of the day, it's about artistry – it's about knowing the platform well, and knowing what we can get away with, and being smarter about using it. But where we separate Gears 2 is the features.

Sure, it looks better, but honestly people remember Gears looking so good that when we show them Gears 2 they remember it looking better than it really did. You have this classic memory of "Gears of War was so much better than everybody else", and so for this one, it's about the new game modes, it's about the

thicker story – I think that's what separates Gears 2 from the original.

**While the first game garnered much critical acclaim, as with any game, there were criticisms. Which ones in particular have you tried to respond to most with Gears 2?**

Good question. For everybody who said they loved Gears, there was someone who said they had a problem with it. I think the most heard complaint we had about Gears 1 was the lack of a driving story. We had a simple story, it's a nice, simple plot arc, but there's not a lot of character depth in the first one, and you need something to carry you through lots of ripping the





## > Gears of War 2 continued

Locust horde up for hours on end. So that's an area we really wanted to step up, and I think the team really impressed me there. Other areas... the party system was something everyone wanted – Halo did such a great job with the party system, and we said “we can take that, we can make it better, and we can do our own thing with it”, and I think we have.

**When we spoke to Cliff last month, he talked about how Epic tried to avoid ‘feature creep’ – were there any aspects of the game which had to be dropped for that reason?**

Yeah, I mean we can't just add fifteen new weapons and keep all the old ones, because there's a balance there and you don't want to overwhelm people with too much. So yeah, we tried to delete things out – there are monsters that were very popular in Gears 1 that don't show up at all in Gears 2 – quite purposely, because we need to give it a break, and put something new in there instead.

So yeah, of course, every time we start we have crazy ideas of all the things we want to do, and things have been cut. I don't think we've got

any good stories about great things that we cut, because we kept all the great stuff! It's the junk that we cut that you don't want to hear about.

**Moving onto the multiplayer modes, how did the idea for Horde come about? And which is the multiplayer mode of choice in the Epic offices?**

Well, it's sort of a two-parter there because Horde is definitely the mode of choice in the Epic office. We like Guardian, we like Wingman – I mean, we play them all, because we need to test them all, but Horde just catches you. What I love about it is that it's tactical. More than any other mode. You've got five guys playing together, and one goes down and he's going “there's a Boomer coming up the steps, watch out!” and “Flamer! Flamer!” You're like a military squad fighting against crazy odds, and that's so funny. You know, we've shipped game modes similar [to Horde].

*“We don't have good stories about what we cut, because we kept the great stuff!”*



The Locust enemies are more varied than before – some have protective armour, making headshots tricky

Unreal Tournament had one called Invasion, which had the old Unreal baddies coming at you wave after wave, so we've done something similar before. But you get to see all the monsters that you don't normally get to see in Gears unless you play through the whole darn thing. I don't know – it just really resonated. First time we tried it, we loved it, and then the question was how do we make it last? How do we make you want to play it again, and get to the highest wave you can, and the next day do it again? And I think we hit that.

**The first game was hugely popular online, but soon developed a balance problem with the grenade-tagging, while**



Gears' wintry atmosphere makes for some oddly beautiful scenes

**the game as it is now seems to favour the shotgun. Will you be keeping a watchful eye on the online game and respond to any problems which may occur?**

Oh God, yeah. We play constantly online, making sure there's no exploits, anything that takes







Dizzy is a new character introduced during the opening Act. His cowboy hat makes him instantly recognisable in multiplayer!

## > Gears of War 2 continued

the fun out, right? Because we want people playing online until we make a next game. So yeah, we solved the roll and shotgun problem – well, not really a problem, it just became a golden tactic that everyone was using, and that's no fun if everyone's using the same thing, so we've added stopping power in, so if someone comes in charging with a shotgun, you just put a few bullets into them, that slows them down real quick.

So yeah, we'll absolutely be online watching. Epic's had a reputation for years of patching and upgrading, and giving away downloadable content – whatever we have to do to

make sure our guys online are happy.

**Gears has a new, easier difficulty level for beginners, and the option to filter the blood and language, to make it accessible to more people. Do you think it can genuinely break out from its hardcore roots and become a game for casual gamers to truly enjoy?**

*"We'll do whatever we have to, to make sure online players are happy"*

I'd love to think that Gears would be "the game anyone can play". Sure, we start with a hardcore audience, and I think we expand from it. For example, a hardcore player plays co-op with his girlfriend or their friends, who aren't maybe the kind who play every shooter that comes out, but hopefully they'll get into it. They'll find it easy to play, exciting, and then they want to play it through – maybe buy a copy even! – and then we'll spread out to their friends and all that.

**Did you consider bringing out a version of the game which contains no blood or bad language, and selling it to a younger audience?**

A teen version of Gears – how would you do that? The story's too mature to be a teen story, really. And there are markets like Japan and Germany who have pretty strict rules on that and we just decided to skip it. We'd rather make the game we want to make, and hopefully, gamers are going to like it again. The turning off the gibs, and turning off the bad language is really for hardcore gamers whose kids are in the room.

That's what it's for, it's not because we want to create a Teen experience, because you're using

chainsaws man! It's not that [type of] game.

**Where do you see the franchise going next? Can we expect a Gears 3 in two years' time, or is it time to look at a new direction for the series?**

I think just as we said after Gears 1, we'll see if people like it, we'll see if we sell any, and we'll make a decision then. There was a lot of interest for more Gears, and it was awesome, and so we jumped on it, and I think we made a better game. So we'll see what folks say.

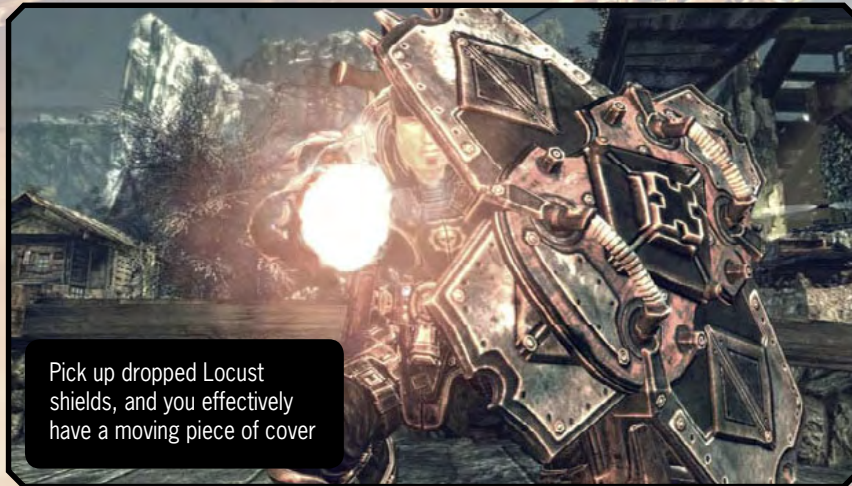
**Will Gears remain an Xbox exclusive series?**

Well, we don't have any plans for another game, so it's hard to answer that one. Let's just say that as a developer being able to focus just on the Xbox has been



Locust artificial intelligence seems more robust than ever





Pick up dropped Locust shields, and you effectively have a moving piece of cover

## > Gears of War 2 continued

great, because we can take that one machine and just make it sing. And of course Microsoft was pretty darn good to us – we got a lot of attention with the first Gears, and we're getting it again this time. No compromise there.

### Can you tell us what downloadable content there will be for Gears 2?

We've only announced the first one, which is the five maps – the [free] Flashback pack which you get if you buy retail, so you'll have those on day one. But yep, can't say anything yet. More good stuff!

### What else is Epic working on currently? Can we expect more from Unreal in the near future? How about new IP?

Well, we're working on next-gen engines, and we're thinking about next-gen platforms and Unreal Engine 4 – we've been on that for a year or two now. We're not quite sure when next platforms are coming but we all know they are,

*"Making a jaded reviewer cry in one of our cinematics was gorgeous!"*



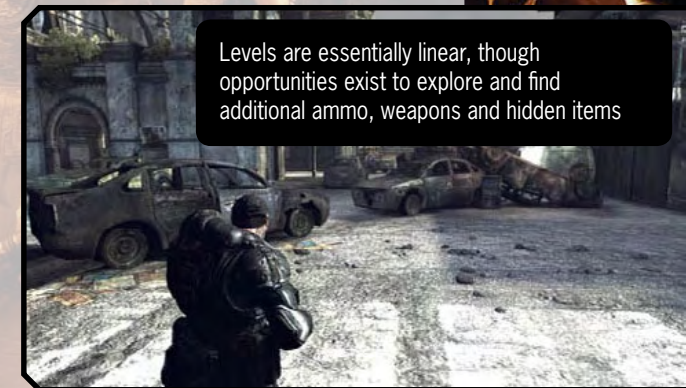
The opening intro set in an abandoned hospital is an effective scene-setter, but things get much more intense later on

right? So, we've got to be ready for that. We'll be out when the consoles are out, and we'll see when that is – 2012 or 2013 – I hope it's a long time. So that team's working on tech, but we're also working on Unreal Tournament – coming up with stuff for those guys, we're doing the big Make Something Unreal contest – a million-dollar contest for mods, and so we've got a team focusing on cool stuff for Unreal now. Because like I said, we make cool stuff available [for our games] long after we ship them.

### Finally, what one single aspect of the game are you most proud of? Is there anything you've achieved that you previously didn't think possible?

Making a jaded reviewer cry in one of our cinematics was gorgeous! You know, I love to get great reviews, and all that but my fiancée played the game and she was really

impressed with the story. And that doesn't happen. Girls don't play an action game like Gears and go "wow!" or whatever else. And making a jaded reviewer tear up a little bit was quite something. I mean obviously not you guys [UK journalists] but you know us US guys, we cry all the time! So that's been really gratifying – to do something more than anyone was expecting with a hard-M [Mature] shooter. ●



Levels are essentially linear, though opportunities exist to explore and find additional ammo, weapons and hidden items



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